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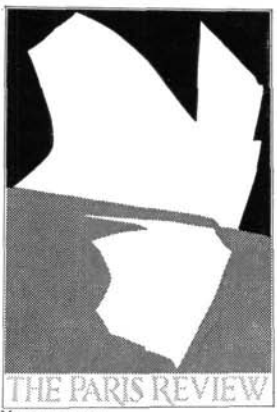

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The Paris Review is published by The Paris Review, S.A.R.L. au capital de 10.000 F. Vol 13, No 51. Numéro de presse 26.295. Winter 1971. European office at 17 rue de Tournon, Paris 6. American office at 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, New York 11358. Distributors in the USA: Eastern News Company and Doubleday & Co.; outside of France & USA: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 30 Bedford Square, London WC 1. Representative of The Paris Review Inc. of New York in France: Société Tourvoy, 17 rue de Tournon, Paris 6; la gérante: Mme. Colette Duhamel. Printed in the Netherlands by Koninklijke Drukkerij G.J. Thieme, N.V., Nijmegen.

Price per copy in France: 5F; in the USA: $1.25; in the UK: 30p. Postpaid subscription for four issues in France: 21 F; in the USA: $4; in the UK & sterling area: £1.40.

Fiction manuscripts should be submitted to the Flushing or Paris offices; poetry to Tom Clark, c/o Flushing office. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by addressed envelope and stamps or international postage coupons.

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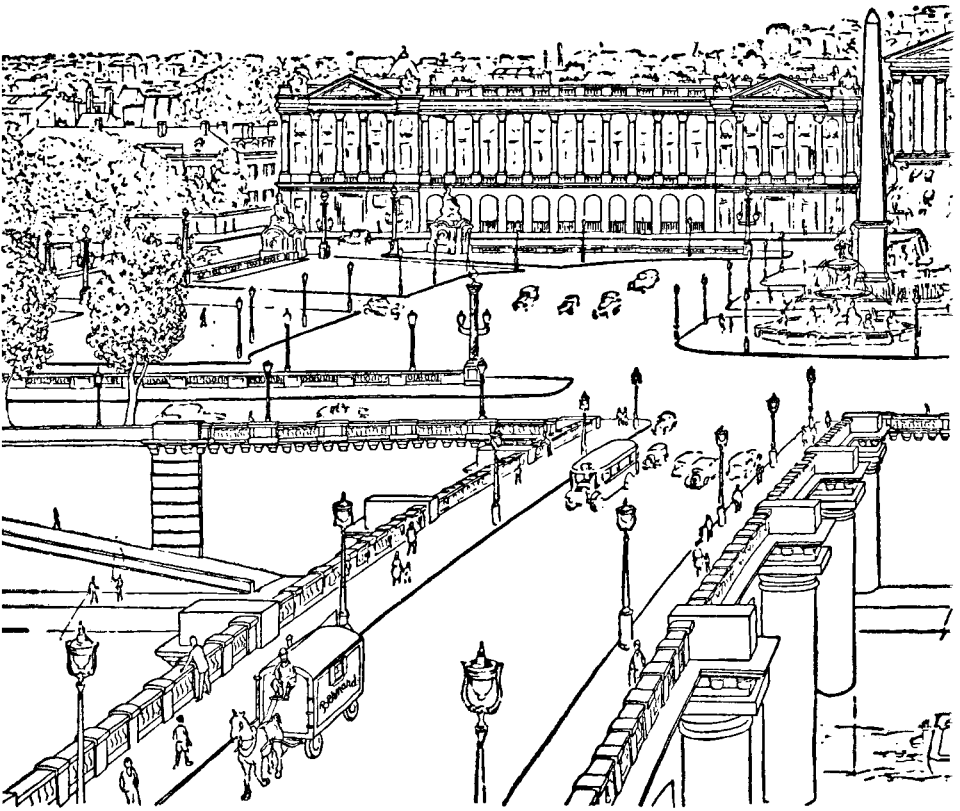

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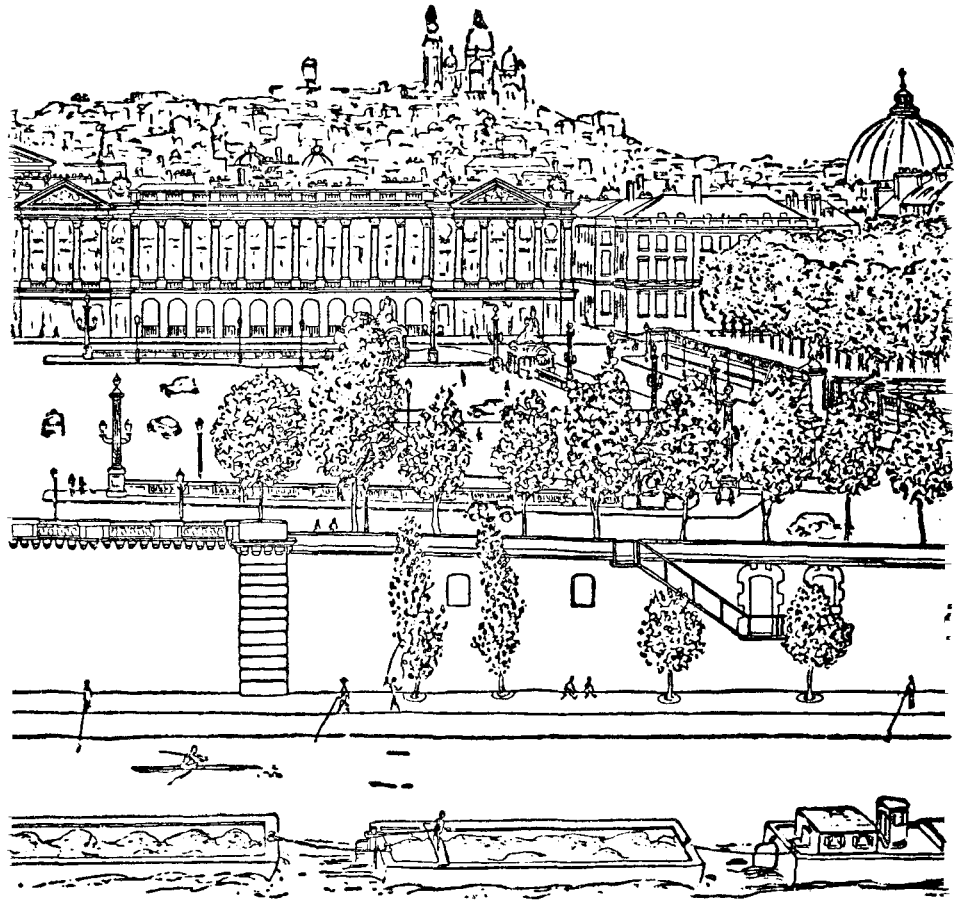

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Photograph of Pablo Neruda by Facio-D'Amico

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Michael McClure

Moiré

for Francis Crick

1. THE CHANTING IN TIBET HAS NOT CEASED IT IS AS IMMORTAL AS MEAT IS.

2. HORNS, CYMBALS, AND LIGHTNING BOLTS OVER GLACIERS.

3. BEARDED SEA OTTERS CRACKING MUSSELS ON STONES ON THEIR STOMACHS.

4. COYOTES LAUGH AND PRANCE ON POINT REYES.

5. REVIVE THE PLEISTOCENE.

6. PLEISTOCENE IS NOT GLACIO-THERMAL IT IS MEAT-MAMMALIAN.

7. CRACKS ON THE SIDEWALK REFLECT THE DISPERSION OF CLOUDS AND AURAS OF COLOR.

8. "REALITY" IS A POINT, A PLATEAU, A MYSTERY.

9. IT MAY BE PENETRATED.

10. WILDFLOWERS; MAN ROOT, SEPTEMBER BLACKBERRIES, MONKEYFLOWERS.

11. POEMS AND PERCEPTIONS PENETRATE THE PLATEAU.

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12. SUCCULENT GARDENS HANG ON CLIFFS.

13. THE VELVET BUTTERFLY AND THE SMILING WEASEL.

14. BENIGN VISAGES FLOATING IN AIR.

15. SPIRIT IS ACTION.

16. ACTION IS PROTEIN.

17. BONES OF THE SABER TUSK IN ASPHALT.

18. MOTILE POEMS LIKE FINGERS OR ROOT TIPS.

19. AMINO TRIGGERS IN SPACE.

20. WE ARE ACTIVITY.

21. BELOW US IS STEADY AND SOLID.

22. SOON ENOUGH.

23. PERHAPS WE RETURN TO A POOL—STEADY AND SOLID.

24. NO MATTER—ANTI-MATTER.

25. WE HAVE THE JOY OF HERETICS.

26. WE DID NOT CHOOSE IT—WE ARE.

27. PERFECT.

28. PERFECT PLATEAU BECOMING ODORS AND TOUCHES.

29. I DID NOT KNOW THIS IS NATURE.

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30. THE BLANKET FLOWS OUT OF THE WINDOW —ON IT ARE YELLOW BANDS WOVEN WITH RED BISON.

31. SOLID BLACKNESS ABOVE AND BELOW.

32. MUSIC BETWEEN.

33. FORESTS OF MOSS IN THE COLD STREAM.

34. BULK OF A DEAD SEA LION—DARK EYES OPEN.

35. THE DESERT IS ALIVE.

36. THE FIR FEELS THE SOLSTICE.

37. SENSE HORIZONTALLY, ASPIRE VERTICALLY—*AGNOSIA.*

38. KEATS, DIRAC, DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE.

39. TRUMPETS, CYMBALS, WARM GRASS, ROAR OF A MOTORCYCLE.

40. LEATHER, QUARTZ, AND CINNAMON.

41. DISSOLUTION IS A PRIVILEGE.

42. HAIL PLANARIAN!

43. SWEET WARM AND ODOROUS IN THE AUTUMN SUN.

44. BLACKER THAN BLACK, BLUE-BLACK—A MIRROR REFLECTING REDS.

45. SCREAMS AND FLAMES OVER THE HORIZON.

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46. CREAK OF EUCALYPTUS BOUGHS.

47. THE PLATEAU IS A POINT, THE MASK OF A DIMENSION.

48. THE MASK IS ENFORCED BY SOCIALIZATION OF PERCEPTIONS.

49. SEPTEMBER BLACKBERRIES ARE FREE.

50. THERE ARE STILL BLOSSOMS.

51. CONDENSATION FALLS PATTERING ON LEAVES.

52. MACHINEGUNS COMMUNICATE BULLETS.

53. BOMBS ARE SYMBOLS FOR MEAT THOUGHTS.

54. FACES OF MALEVOLENCE AND FOLLY STARE FROM THE WALLS.

55. THE FLEECE MOVING IN THE BREEZE BY THE FIRE IS LOVELY.

56. WE ARE OLD WOLVES, INDIANS, CREATURES.

57. ETERNITY BECOMES BROWN GOLD FOR AN INSTANT.

58. TIME IS THE LONG WAY BACK.

59. IGNORANCE, LIKE INFORMATION, IS A LEVER.

60. THE BODY'S ODORS—THE BERRY'S ODORS.

61. THE MASS OF INFORMATION WHITES OUT.

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62. RAINBOW AGAINST WHITE—PROJECTED ON BLACK.

63. THE SELVES FLYING THROUGH THE BODY HAVE FACES.

64. THEY STREAM WITH TAILS OF COLORS.

65. SENSATION MAY PRECEDE INFORMATION.

66. WE DIVE BOTH DOWN AND OUTWARD.

67. SOLIDITY AND VIBRATION.

68. UNEXPECTED PROFILES AND FACES.

69. THE BRAMBLE TANGLE IS MOVING SCULPTURE.

70. DRAGONS OF SPACE AND MATTER

71. FALSE PERCEPTIONS MIMIC THE REAL—A COVER.

72. THE BODY MAY BE DIAGRAMMED WITH COLORS AND ODORS.

73. THERE IS A FIRE AND TRAJECTORIES OF ENERGIES.

74. BEYOND THE MASK OF THE POINT ARE TRILLIONIC INTERLOCKED CONSTELLATIONS.

75. PLEASURES ARE NOT RELATIVE BUT ACTUAL —BLACKBERRIES, SEA LIONS, TENDRILS.

76. PERCEPTIONS ARE HERETIC—THEY NEGATE ABSENCE.

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77. ABSENCE IS LACK OF PERCEPTION.

78. THE MUSSEL SHELL CRACKS ON THE ROCK.

79. WAVES OF WATER AND PROTOPLASM.

80. COYOTE SHIT—THE TAJ MAHAL.

81. WINGED TIGERS ENCASED IN TRANSPARENT SILVER.

82. MY WHISKERS—THE WOLF'S BEARD.

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Steve Brooks

the breakfast show

when i'm in someone else's new york style apartment
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when i'm at home i can't find anything that i like
i don't like rock and roll or classical music
the girl reading sylvia plath is too playful
instead of filling my room the radio is a hole
strange winds blow through
the day begins when you wake up
that is the moment people make their demands
clear determined voices reach into my bed
thousands of options are made insistently available
get up
i move to escape through the silent unsealed radio
but someone's pushing buttons
and strange winds blow into my room like hands

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The Destruction of the Goetheanum

James Salter

In the garden, standing alone, he found the young woman who was a friend of the writer William Hedges, then unknown but even Kafka had lived in obscurity, she said, and so moreover had Mendel, perhaps she meant Mendeleyev. They were staying in a little hotel across the Rhine. No one could seem to find it, she said.

The river there flowed swiftly, the surface was alive. It carried things away, broken wood and branches. They turned, went under, emerged. Sometimes pieces of furniture passed, ladders, windows. Once, in the rain, a chair.

They were living in the same room, but it was completely platonic. Her hand bore no ring, no jewelry of any kind. Her wrists were bare.

"He doesn't like to be alone," she said. "He's struggling with his work." It was a novel, still far from finished though parts were extraordinary. A fragment had been published in Rome. "It's called *The Goetheanum*," she said. "Do you know what that is?"

He tried to remember the curious word already dissolving in his mind. The lights inside the house had begun to appear

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in the blue evening.

"It's the one great act of his life."

The hotel she had spoken of was small with small rooms and letters in yellow across the facade. There were many buildings like it. From the cool flank of the cathedral it was visible among them, below and a little downstream. Also through the windows of antique shops and alleys.

Two days later he saw her from a distance. She was unmistakable. She moved with a kind of spent grace, like a dancer whose career is ended. The crowd ignored her.

"Oh," she said, "yes, hello."

Her voice seemed vague. He was sure she did not recognize him. He didn't know exactly what to say,

"I was thinking about some of the things you told me..." he began.

She stood with people pushing past her, her arms filled with packages. The street was hot. She did not understand who he was, he was certain of it. She was performing simple errands, those of a remote and saintly couple.

"Forgive me," she said, "I'm really not myself."

"We met at Sarren's," he explained.

"Yes, I know."

A silence followed. He wanted to say something quite simple to her but she was preventing it.

She had been to the museum. When Hedges worked he had to be alone, sometimes she would find him asleep on the floor.

"He's crazy," she said. "Now he's sure there'll be a war. Everything's going to be destroyed."

Her own words seemed to disinterest her. The crowd was pulling her away.

"Can I walk with you for a minute?" he asked. "Are you going towards the bridge?"

She looked both ways.

"Yes," she decided.

They went down the narrow streets. She said nothing. She

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glanced in shop windows. She had a mouth which curved downwards, a serving girl's mouth, a girl from small towns.

"Are you interested in painting?" he heard her ask.

In the museum there were Holbein's and Hodler's, El Greco's, Max Ernst. The silence of long salons. In them one understood what it meant to be great.

"Do you want to go tomorrow?" she said. "No, tomorrow we're going somewhere. What about the day after?"

Thursday. He woke early, he was already nervous. The room seemed empty. The sky was yellow with light. The surface of the river, between stone banks, was incandescent. The water rushed in fragments white as fire, at their center one could not even look.

By nine the sky had faded, the river was broken into silver. At ten it was brown, the color of soup. Barges and old-fashioned steamers were working slowly upstream or going swiftly down. The piers of the bridges trailed small wakes.

A river is the soul of a city, only water and air can purify. At Basel, the Rhine lies between well-established, stone banks. The trees are carefully trimmed, the old houses hidden behind them.

He looked for her everywhere. He crossed the Rheinbrucke and, watching faces, went to the open market through the crowds. He searched among the stalls. Women were buying flowers, they boarded streetcars and sat with the bunches in their laps. In the Borse restaurant fat men were eating, their ears were close to their heads.

She was nowhere to be found. He even entered the cathedral, expecting for a moment to find her waiting in the great, holy coolness. There was no one. The city was turning to stone. The pure hour of sunlight had passed, there was nothing left now but a raging afternoon that burned his feet. The clocks struck three. He gave up and returned to the hotel. There was an edge of white paper in his box. It was a note, she would meet him at four.

In excitement he lay down to think. She had not forgotten.

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He read it again. Were they really meeting in secret? He was not certain what that meant. Hedges was forty, he had almost no friends, his wife was somewhere back in Connecticut, he had left her, he had renounced the past. If he was not great, he was following the path of greatness which is the same as disaster, and he had the power to make one devote oneself to his life. She was with him constantly. I'm never out of his sight, she complained. Nadine: it was a name she had chosen herself.

She was late. They ended up going to tea at five o'clock; Hedges was busy reading English newspapers. They sat at a table overlooking the river, the menus in their hands long and slim as airline tickets. She seemed very calm. He wanted to keep looking at her, he couldn't. *Hummersalat*, he was reading somehow, *rumpsteak*. She was very hungry, she announced. She had been at the museum, the paintings made her ravenous.

"Where were you?" she said.

Suddenly he realized she had expected him. There were young couples strolling the galleries, their legs washed in sunlight. She had wandered among them. She knew quite well what they were doing: they were preparing for love. His eyes slipped.

"I'm starving," she said.

She ate asparagus, then a goulash soup, and after that a cake she did not finish. The thought crossed his mind that perhaps they had no money, she and Hedges, that it was her only meal of the day.

"No," she said. "William has a sister who's married to a very rich man. He can get money there."

It seemed she had the faintest accent. Was it English?

"I was born in Genoa," she told him.

She quoted a few lines of Valery which he later found out were incorrect. *Afternoons torn by wind, the stinging sea* ... She adored Valery. An anti-Semite, she said.

She described a trip to Dornach, it was forty minutes away by streetcar, then a long walk from the station where she had

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stood arguing with Hedges about which way to go, it always annoyed her that he had no sense of direction. It was uphill, he was soon out of breath.

Dornach had been chosen by the teacher Rudolf Steiner to be the center of his realm. There, not far from Basel, beyond the calm suburbs, he had dreamed of establishing a community with a great, central building to be named after Goethe, whose ideas had inspired it, and in 1913 the cornerstone for it was finally laid. The design was Steiner's own, as were all the details, techniques, the paintings, the specially engraved glass. He invented its construction just as he had its shape.

It was to be built entirely of wood, two enormous domes which intersected, the plot of that curve itself was a mathematical event. Steiner believed only in curves, there were no right angles anywhere. Small, tributary domes like helmets contained the windows and doors. Everything was wood, everything except the gleaming Norwegian slates that covered the roof. The earliest photographs showed it surrounded by scaffolding like some huge monument, in the foreground were groves of apples trees. The construction was carried on by people from all over the world, many of them abandoned professions and careers. By the spring of 1914 the roof timbers were in position, and while they were still laboring the war broke out. From the nearby provinces of France they could actually hear the rumble of cannon. It was the hottest month of summer.

She showed him a photograph of a vast, brooding structure.

"The Goetheanum," she said.

He was silent. The darkness of the picture, the resonance of the domes had begun to invade him. He submitted to it as to the mirror of a hypnotist. He could feel himself slipping from reality. He did not struggle. He longed to kiss the fingers which held the postcard, the lean arms, the skin which smelled like lemons. He felt himself trembling, he knew she could see it. They sat like that, her gaze was calm. He was entering the grey, the Wagnerian scene before him which she might close at any moment like a matchbox and replace in her bag. The windows resembled an old hotel somewhere in middle

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Europe. In Prague. The shapes sang to him. It was a fortification, a terminal, an observatory from which one could look into the soul.

"Who is Rudolf Steiner?" he said.

He hardly heard her explanation. He was beginning to have ecstasies. Steiner was a great teacher, a savant who believed deep insights could be revealed in art. He believed in movements and mystery plays, rhythms, creation, the stars. Of course. And somehow from this she had learned a scenario. She had become the illusionist of Hedge's life.

It was Hedges, the convict Joyce scholar, the rumpled ghost at literary parties, who had found her. He was distant at first, he barely spoke a word to her the night they met. She had not been in New York long then. She was living on Twelfth Street in a room with no furniture. The next day the phone rang. It was Hedges. He asked her to lunch. He had known from the first exactly who she was, he said. He was calling from a phone booth, the traffic was roaring past.

"Can you meet me at Haroot's?" he said.

His hair was uncombed, his fingers stained. He was sitting by the wall, too nervous to look at anything except his hands. She became his companion.

They spent long days together wandering in the city. He wore shirts the color of blue ink, he bought her clothes. He was wildly generous, he seemed to care nothing for money, it was crumpled in his pockets like waste paper, when he paid for things it would fall on the floor. He made her come to restaurants where he was dining with his wife and sit at the bar so he could watch her while they ate.

Slowly he began her introduction to another world, a world which scorned exposure, a world more rich than the one she knew, certain occult books, philosophies, even music. She discovered she had a talent for it, an instinct. She achieved a kind of power over herself. There were periods of deep affection, serenity. They sat in a friend's house and listened to Scriabin. They ate at the Russian Tea Room, the waiters knew his name. Hedges was performing an extraordinary act, he was fusing her life. He, too, had found a new existence: he

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was a criminal at last. At the end of a year they came to Europe.

"He's intelligent," she said. "You feel it immediately. He has a mind that touches everything."

"How long have you been with him?"

"Forever," she said.

They walked back towards her hotel in that one, dying hour which ends the day. The trees by the river were black as stone. *Wozzeck* was playing at the theater to be followed by *The Magic Flute*. In the print shops were maps of the city and drawings of the famous bridge as it looked in Napoleon's time. The banks were filled with newly minted coins. She was strangely silent. They stopped once, before a restaurant with a tank of fish, great speckled trout larger than a shoe lazing in green water, their mouths working slowly. Her face was visible in the glass like a woman's on a train, indifferent, alone. Her beauty was directed towards no one. She seemed not to see him, she was lost in her thoughts. Then, coldly, without a word, her eyes met his. They did not waver. In that moment he realized she was worth everything.

They had not had an easy time. Reason is unequal to man's problems, Hedges said. His wife had somehow gotten hold of his bank account, not that it was much, but she had a nose like a ferret, she found other earnings that might have come his way. Further, he was sure his letters to his children were not being delivered. He had to write them at school and in care of friends.

The question above all and always, however, was money. It was crushing them. He wrote articles but they were hard to sell, he was no good at anything topical. He did a piece about Giacometti with many haunting quotations which were entirely invented. He tried everything. Meanwhile, on every side it seemed, young men were writing filmscripts or selling things for enormous sums.

Hedges was alone. The men his age had made their reputations, everything was passing him by. Anyway he often felt

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it. He knew the lives of Cervantes, Stendhal, Italo Svevo but none of them were as improbable as his own. And wherever they went there were his notebooks and papers to carry. Nothing is heavier than paper.

In Grasse he had trouble with his teeth, something went bad in the roots of old repairs. He was in misery, they had to pay a French dentist almost every penny they had. In Venice he was bitten by a cat. A terrible infection developed, his arm swelled to twice its size, it seemed the skin would burst. The *cameriera* told them cats had venom in their mouth like snakes, the same thing had happened to her son. Hedges was in agony, he could not sleep. The bites were always deep, she said, the poison entered the blood. It would have been much worse fifty years ago, the doctor told them. He touched a point up near his shoulder. Hedges was too weak to ask what it meant. Twice a day a woman came with a hypodermic in a battered tin box and gave him shots. He was growing more feverish. He could no longer read. He wanted to dictate some final things, Nadine took them down. He insisted on being buried with her photograph over his heart, he had made her promise to tear it from her passport.

"How will I get home?" she asked.

Beneath them in the sunlight the great river flowed, almost without a sound. The lives of artists seem beautiful at last, even the terrible arguments about money, the nights there is nothing to do. Besides, through it all, Hedges was never helpless. He lived one life and imagined ten others, he could always find refuge in one of them.

"But I'm tired of it," she said. "He's selfish. He's a child."

She did not look like a woman who had suffered. She drove very fast. Her teeth were white. On the far pathways couples were having lunch, the girls with their shoes off, their feet slanting down the bank. They were throwing bits of bread in the water.

The development of the individual had reached its apogee, Hedges believed, that was the essence of our time. A new direction must be found. He did not believe in collectivism, however. That was a blind road. He wasn't certain yet of what

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the path would be. His writing would reveal it, but he was working against time, against a tide of events, he was in exile, like Trotsky. Unfortunately, there was no one to kill him. It doesn't matter, my teeth will do it in the end, he said.

Nadine was staring into the water.

"There are nothing but eels down there," she said.

He followed her gaze. The surface was impenetrable. He tried to find a single, black shadow betrayed by its grace.

"When the time comes to mate," she told him, "they go to the sea."

She watched the water. When the time came they heard somehow, they slithered across meadows in the morning, shining like dew. She was fourteen years old, she told him, when her mother took her favorite doll down to the river and threw it in, the days of being a young girl were over.

"What shall I throw in?" he asked.

She seemed not to hear.

"Do you mean that?" she finally said.

It was arranged, they would all have dinner together, would Hedges sense something or not? He tried not to think about it or allow himself to be alarmed. There were scenes in every literature of this moment, but still he could not imagine what it would be like. A great writer might say, I know I cannot keep her, but would he dare give her up? Hedges, his teeth filled with cavities and all the years lying on top of his unwritten works?

"I owe him so much," she had said.

Still, it was difficult to face the evening calmly. By five o'clock he was in a state of nerves, playing solitaire in his room, re-reading articles in the paper. It seemed that he had forgotten how to speak about things, he was conscious of his facial expressions, nothing he did seemed natural. The person he had been had somehow vanished, it was impossible to create another. Everything was impossible, he imagined a dinner at which he would be humiliated, deceived.

At seven o'clock, afraid the telephone would ring at any

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moment, he went down in the elevator. The glimpse of himself in the mirror reassured him, he seemed ordinary, he seemed calm. He touched his hair. His heart was thundering. He looked at himself again. The door slid open. He stepped out, half expecting to find them there. There was no one. He turned the pages of the Zurich paper while keeping an eye on the door. Finally he managed to sit in one of the chairs. It was awkward. He moved. It was seven-ten. Twenty minutes later an old Citroën backed straight into the grill of a Mercedes parked in the street with a great smashing of glass. The concierge and desk clerk went running out. There were pieces everywhere. The driver of the Citroën was opening his door.

"Oh, Christ," he murmured, looking around.

It was William Hedges.

They all began to talk at once. The owner of the Mercedes, which was blinded, fortunately was not present. A policeman was making his way along the street.

"Well, it's not too serious," Hedges said. He was inspecting his own car. The stoplights were shattered. There was a dent in the trunk.

After much discussion he was finally allowed to enter the hotel. He was wearing a striped cotton jacket and a shirt the color of ink. He had a white face, damp with sweat, the face of an unpopular schoolboy, high forehead, thinning hair, a soft beard touched with grey, the beard of an explorer, a man who washed his socks in the Amazon. He was alone.

"Nadine will be along a little later," he said.

When he reached for a drink, his hand was trembling.

"My foot slipped off the brake," he explained. He quickly lit a cigarette. "The insurance pays that, don't they? Probably not."

He seemed to have reached a stop, the first of many long, of enormous pauses during which he looked in his lap. Then, as if it were the thing he had been struggling to think of, he inquired painfully, "What do you... think of Basel?"

The headwaiter had placed them on opposite sides of the table, the empty chair between them. Its presence seemed to

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weigh on Hedges. He asked for another drink. Turning, he knocked over a glass. That act, somehow, relieved him. The waiter dabbed at the wet tablecloth with a napkin. Hedges spoke around him.

"I don't know exactly what Nadine has told you," he said softly. A long pause. "She sometimes tells... fantastic lies."

"Oh, yes?"

"She's from a little town in Pennsylvania," Hedges muttered. "Julesburg. She's never been... she was just a... an ordinary girl when we met."

They had come to Basel to visit certain institutions, he explained. It was an... interesting city. History has certain sites upon which whole epochs turn, and the village of Dornach gave evidence of a very... The sentence was never finished. Rudolf Steiner had been a student of Goethe...

"Yes, I know."

"Of course. Nadine's been telling you, hasn't she?"

"No."

"I see."

He finally began again, about Goethe. The range of that intellect, he said, had been so extraordinary that he was able, like Leonardo before him, to encompass all of what was then human knowledge.

"All of knowledge," he said distractedly.

That, in itself, implied an overall... coherence, and the fact that no man had been capable of it since could easily mean the coherence no longer existed, it was dissolved... The ocean of things known had burst its shores.

"We are on the verge," Hedges said, "of radical departures in the destiny of man. Those who reveal them..."

The words, coming with agonized slowness, seemed to take forever. They were a ruse, a feint. It was difficult to hear them out.

"...will be torn to pieces like Galileo."

"Is that what you think?"

A long pause again,

"Oh, yes."

They had another drink.

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"We are a little strange, I suppose, Nadine and I," Hedges said, as if to himself.

It was finally the time.

"I don't think she's a very happy woman."

There was a moment of silence, of indecision.

"Happy?" Hedges said. "No, she isn't happy. She isn't capable of being happy. Ecstasies. She is ecstatic. She tells me so every day," he said. He put his hand to his forehead, half covering his eyes. "You see, you don't know her at all."

She was not coming, suddenly that was clear. There was going to be no dinner.

Something should have been said, it ended too obscurely. Ten minutes after Hedges had gone, leaving behind an embarrassing expanse of white and three places set, the thought came of what he should have demanded: I want to talk to her.

All doors had closed. He was miserable, he could not imagine someone with weaknesses, incapacities like his own. He had intended to mutilate a man and it turned into monologue—probably they were laughing about it at that very moment. It had all been humiliating. The river was moving beneath his window, even in darkness the current showed. He stood looking down upon it. He walked about trying to calm himself. He lay on the bed, it seemed his limbs were trembling. He detested himself. Finally he was still.

He had just closed his eyes when the telephone rang in the emptiness of the room. It rang again. A third time. Of course! He had expected it. His heart was jumping as he picked it up. He attempted to say hello quite calmly. A man's voice answered. It was Hedges. He was humble.

"Is Nadine there?" he managed to say.

"Nadine?"

"Please, may I speak to her," Hedges said.

"She's not here."

There was a silence. He could hear Hedges' helpless breathing. It seemed to go on and on.

"Look," Hedges began, his voice was less brave, "I just

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want to talk to her for a moment, that's all... I beg you..."

She was somewhere in the town then, he hurried to find her. He didn't bother to decide where she might be. Somehow the night had turned in his direction, everything was changing. He walked, he ran through the streets, afraid to be late.

It was nearly midnight, people were coming out of the theaters, the café at the Casino was roaring. A sea of hidden and half-hidden faces with the waiters always standing so someone could be hidden behind them, he combed it slowly. Surely she was there. She was sitting at a table by herself, his eyes would find her in a second.

The same cars were turning through the streets, he stepped among them. People walked slowly, stopping at lighted windows. She would be looking at a display of expensive shoes, antique jewelry perhaps, gold necklaces, old watches with faces white as biscuits. At the corners he had a feeling of loss. He passed down interior arcades. He was leaving the more familiar section. The newsstands were locked, the cinemas dark.

Suddenly, like the first truth of illness, the certainty left him. Had she gone back to her hotel? Perhaps she was even at his, or had been there and gone. He knew she was capable of aimless, original acts. Instead of drifting in the darkness of the city, her somewhat languid footsteps existing only to be devoured by his, instead of choosing a place in which to be found as cleverly as she had drawn him to follow, she might have become discouraged and returned to Hedges to say only, I felt like a walk.

There is always one moment, he thought, it never comes again. He began going back, as if lost, along streets he had already seen. The excitement was gone, he was searching, he was no longer sure of his instincts but wondering instead what she might have decided to do.

On the stairway near the Heuwaage, he stopped. The square was empty. He was suddenly cold. A lone man was passing below. It was Hedges. He was wearing no tie, the collar of his jacket was turned up. He walked without direc-

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tion, he was in search of his dreams. His pockets had blue bank notes crumpled in them, cigarettes bent in half. The whiteness of his skin was visible from afar. His hair was uncombed. He did not pretend to be young, he was past that, into the heart of his life, his failed work, a man who took commuter trains, who drank tea, hoping for something, some proof in the end that his talents had been as great as the others'. This world is giving birth to another, he said. We are nearing the galaxy's core. He was writing that, he was inventing it. His poems would become our history.

The streets were deserted, the restaurants had turned out their lights. Alone in a café in the repetition of empty tables, the chairs placed upon them upside down, his dark shirt, his doctor's beard, Hedges sat. He would never find her. He was like a man out of work, an invalid, there was no place to go. The cities of Europe were silent. He coughed a little in the chill.

The Goetheanum of the photograph, the one she had shown him, did not exist. It had burned on the night of December 31, 1922. There had been an evening lecture, the audience had gone home. The night watchman discovered smoke and soon afterwards the fire became visible. It spread with astonishing rapidity and the fireman battled without effect. At last the situation seemed beyond hope. An inferno was rising within the great windows. Steiner called everyone out of the building. Exactly at midnight the main dome was breached, the flames burst through and roared upwards. The windows with their special glass were glowing, they began to explode from the heat. A huge crowd had come from the nearby villages and even from Basel itself where, miles away, the fire was visible. Finally the dome collapsed, green and blue flames soaring from the metal organ pipes. The Goetheanum disappeared, its master, its priest, its lone creator walking slowly in the ashes at dawn.

A new structure made of concrete rose in its place. Of the old, only photos remained.

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Robert Creeley

Poems

DOWN HOME

Water
neither knows
who drinks
it nor
denies.

.

Come
to the
fair
was true
invitation.

.

Who has
less in there
being *more?*

.

I, I, I,
chatter.

.

The kid
outside the house
walking.

.

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Is hunger
only automatic
appetite?

.

Answers:
all
right.

.

Quick
idea of
here was
the place.

.

Never
again
here.

.

FOR MARISOL

A little
water
falls.

.

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NIGHT

Needs most
happily mutual,
this given,
that taken,

the board clear,
and the food
reappears as
one after one

the night finds
persons in a
lovely particular
display. Here

is a street, and
now a car seems
to be coming,
the lights

signal approach at
an intersection when
a locked group
beats upon the

locked door an
inextricable tenderness
of one man's
desire to be there.

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Tom Clark

Bugs Ate This Lake Clean

Conversation

words=canned reasoning

.

Grammar tells us
what kind of an object
anything is. So does light.

.

Chapeau Electrique

He has turned
his hat on.

What do you turn on
when you turn on?

.

It rips them off
of energy
to come on angry
at somebody

.

"Thought
is surrounded
by a
halo..."

.

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You can feel yourself thinking
but can you think yourself feeling?

.

A state of what?

.

"You're a smarty pants
Do you want to dance?"

.

CONCEPTS ARE INSTRUMENTS

Cigarettes are like women.
The best ones are thin and rich.

.

"A lot of Women's Liberation people object
very strongly to that song," says the disc
jockey, after playing "Just Like A Woman"—
"but it's a real situation just the same."

.

Casino Royale

"Think of me as the second woman in
your life—the one after Mata Hari."

.

My wife and my daughter
lying in bed with me
talking about money
(Bolinas 1970)

.

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Don't let the light go out till
I can let all I hold to go

.

Touch is important
in a dark universe,
but print is useless
much less unreal.

.

The Singing Cells
The Night of the Living Dead

.

MEAT SILENCE

All things pass
And so do the places they pass through

.

Any resistance
is no good

.

Mechanical Tao

The robot pushes small obstacles out of the
way, goes round heavy ones, and avoids slopes.

.

To slide around those corners on
Mount Tamalpais with— Volvo ad

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.

NO THINKING
(9.17.70)

.

The BIG crayon
for little fingers

.

Where is it written
that we must write
right side up?

.

Advantage—
ah, it stays with us
past the asking

.

Are we
some kind
of filter, some
diode

it's all being
run through?

.

I am here with this (my mind, etc.)
"I am not here with my mind"

.

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Being
is dying
by loving

.

To live in the world as it is
& save yr soul too
is a lot to do

.

Learning to forget
occurring in the instant,
uneasily wise
& so, poorly aware

Space isn't
in Language—
or as Juliet cries
"Outside! Outside!"

.

I walk in
on occasion

.

One room fronts on
open, unqualified spaces.
The other is bound
by a wall. All its
area is thought up.

.

mind
lines

.

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The Everly Bros—
all their songs
are like dreams

.

I dig mountains
to look at.
Ocean,
be by.

.

KARMA ARMS

where the stars stay
when they're in town

.

Angels carry messages—
like DNA?

.

Juliet swings past
in ski pants
for the love of Krishna

.

Happier than I thought I was

.

"What has the greatest importance
is not the twelve tones, but,
much more, the serial conception..."

.

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MORE

More hair
every
day

.

Lively,
the voices
move.
A lovely,
roving
mind.

.

Wife,
friend
for life
if ever.

.

The music—
go with it—

as, bathed,
one floats.

.

Bugs ate this lake clean.

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Skyblue as the Letter C

Dallas E. Wiebe

The red and cream Santa Fe Trailways bus pitched and rocked along the cracking, heat-racked asphalt. Around the square, jagged Rupp corners, along the dust-haloed fields, across the Twin Bridges, past windbreaks and leaning, paintless barns, past sagging, rusted barbed wire, and turned left at the cemetery, turned by the yellow, condemned (no fire escapes) mausoleum. In the moon-filled night the landscape of stubble and clod seemed furry in the wind that skinned the topsoil and made of it a gauze for the wounded land, a lining for the painful nose and a patina for the grunting lungs. The sifting, spinning dust snaked along in the headlights of the bus, so that the bus seemed to sail in choppy waters. It was the process of ruin and refurbishing after the crops were off and the land gouged hopefully and painfully into a future harvest.

Dust and moonlight, lust and August blight, Summer limping away to lick its wounds, time walking off with the verdant, and Skyblue (two bits one way) riding by, into and through it all, sitting on the hairy seat, sitting in his sweaty blue jeans, sitting in the grease of Halo, Skyblue "le hot" on his way to Halstead and the sweet smelling virgin, Skyblue riding off into the west, into that furious, folding star now set that burned for him and dragged him in his way. His star, the evening star, now obliterated, now gone away from him into a neon sunset of Kansas dust and our solar system sun. His star now folded into the vespers of the final shepherd and his infinite crook.

Toward Millie, the quivering girl he had met on the swings

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at Athletic Park in Newton while a band concert banged across their ears. While "Stars and Stripes Forever" clubbed its clubfooted chords around the park, Sky bumped her swing and she smiled in the dusk. There, in the gloaming, shaking in their military world, frightened among their fierce parents, they exchanged first names, high schools, ages, homes, telephone numbers, addresses and last names. After that there were sneaky phone calls, clumsy circumlocutions and finally an arrangement of sorts. At least, Sky hoped he was right about the day and place. Secretly he knew he needn't worry. Why, hell, Millie surely would walk on broken glass to get to him. He was what she wanted, he knew, because he was the Newton boy, the well washed gift of the city, the mystery of larger places, the blond love and grace that divine providence sends down to the biggest little city in America.

When the bus stopped by the Marat Hotel, Sky got off and walked over to the tennis court by the high school. There he sat down on the still warm concrete, sat by the wind-wriggled net, sat by that steel aeolian harp of the prairies, to wait for Millie to finish the supper dishes, scrub up the cream separator, bathe, rinse off in Evening in Paris, put on J. C. Penney sex and lie her way out of the dumb sight of Saturday night. Sat with his alfalfa-scratched forearms, sat quiet after the brutal heat of a day in a closed barn, sat on his trembling legs, sat in his exhaustion from bucking bales of alfalfa up flights of sagging steps, sat under his blond curls that took the light of the moon and made him the cynosure of the town. After endless walking up with hay, he sat patient and still, waiting in the wind for the buffalo girl to come out from where the buffalo roamed to make him, to touch him with her magic wand and turn him into a real boy, waited in his gentle humor, in his pious love, in his happy bulges, waited for her to come and bless him with her innocence.

And so, indeed, did she come at eleven P.M., out of the obscurity (her lies having failed), out of nothing, out of the mouth of darkness, out of the airy loam, out of the dark night where lay the clowns of Halstead, out of a window, barefoot, sandals in hand, out of a trembling bed, her hair

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long and golden, her green dress whipped tight around her by the amorous wind, her Evening in Paris gone on some happy zephyr and now floating 5000 feet above Kansas City. She came in her simple self, her dress, her underclothes, her sandals slapping the bottoms of her heels (oh happy slap, that), her untouched smile and with a ton of love for the muscles of the gentle Skyblue. Came to him with grace and softness, squatted over him worldly and wordlessly, turned back his head, kissed him and then pulled his head against her eye-puncturing breasts.

The tennis net sagged with the kiss but snapped back to the functional when they got up and walked north along Chestnut Street, along the side street to stay out of the eyes of the night watchman and out of the pus-filled minds of the clucking gossip queens. Over the heated Santa Fe tracks, across the spur and past the baseball field, over the swinging bridge and down under the Kit Carson tree. Over the river and through the wind and under the tingling stars. There to sit on a tumid, flood-deposited mound of warm sand and soil, a little gift from the Spring rains for them, despite the shells of dead crawdads and despite the sloughed skins of snakes. Despite the mosquitoes and chiggers, despite the water moccasins and the spiky grass, despite the reeds and the rocks, despite it all and bordered by the Little Arkansas River, that flowed past like a brown godlet and carrying light despite its burden of mud and trash.

The Little River slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely and set the earthly limits on that love, made for it a stage wherein thoughts and the night could act out their little plot, made for it an overture that was awful still and grand. As quiet and contemplative as the sky, an air of waiting seemed to hang over it, over it and the reflected faces of the lovers winking up like the white faces of drowned men and children. Sky thought, when he crossed over, that the Little Arkansas was one of the proudest creeks of which these old United States could boast. The water discernible, glistening, as the glare from the stars danced over its muddy surface, ricocheted the quivering reflections over the bosom of the

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waters, rendering the darkness trebly deep outside that limpid sheet of jewels. As it wound its way through that even territory, dark with trees and jutting gray stone that often marked its course, it became the placid current of Skyblue's dreams. It became and carried a sweet mystery in its gentle, awful stirrings over the wide-rolling grassy prairies. It mixed shades and shadows, drowned dreams, somnambulisms, reveries. To any meditative Magian rover, such as Skyblue, the Little River had to become the river of his adoption. Since it washes the feet of the new-built Kansas towns, drains the national vessel of its excess liquids, mysteriously divides those external swells of hills, still preserves its heathenish integrity, the mossy breath of the new found river floated through the atmosphere until the forms of beauty fell naturally around the path of him who was in the performance of his proper work.

For the sitters on the shore, thoughts flowed and circulated, and this portion of time was but the current hour. With the undulations of the waters—undulation being the gentlest and most ideal of motions since it is produced by one fluid falling upon another—graceful flights of thoughts coursed steadily through their minds and tickled them like the chafing of spring freshets, jiggled them lightly while the finny contemporaries in the Halstead waters leaped and flopped in the healthy tumult that proves the last day is not yet at hand. Until it all suffered a sea change, until the stillness was intense and almost conscious, as if it were the natural night of Eden and they fancied that the darkness was the night of a celestial nursery. Until the water, full of starry reflections, became a lower heaven itself. Until it seemed that fears, like ghosts, stealthily withdrew in every direction into the winds, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. Until the Little River became a creek of the first water which Halstead wears in its hair. Until it became the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. Until it became earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. Until it seemed that it had a patent of Heaven to be the only Little Arkansas in the world and a distiller of celestial thoughts. Until it seemed to be where youths and maidens can conspire

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with the wild luxuriant beauty of nature. Until, while the air did gently heave and the landscape was clothed in a mild and quiet lust, Pan did still seem to reign in his pristine glory, with his ruddy face, his flowing beard and his shaggy body, his pipe and his crook. Until Sky sang to his buoyant and floating self, "Flow gently, sweet Little Arkansas River, beside the green broads. Flow gently and I'll whistle a song in your praise. My Millie's het up by your murmuring catfish. Flow gently, Little River, don't disturb her milky tongue." Until Skyblue had the impression that some question had been put.

The river slipped by and changed into a smooth apron of water before the creek tumbled into the white water at the foot of the dam. The stars twitched on in their intricate, static crowds. And the wind came strong from the west in gusts and grunts until it ground up soil and filled the air with an arid gauze. That mighty strong wind from the west shook the reeds and blasted their empty ears. On the wings of the wind, that wind that seemed able to bring the locusts, make the sea go back, bowl the black clouds and rend the mountains, that great wind from the wilderness, came that great mouth saying that life is wind and man is stubble before it. Saying that to fill the belly with the wind is to pursue the soul. Saying that the wind lifts up, passes and cleans. Saying that man is chaff which the winds drive away, that life walks upon the stormy winds, that wind fulfills the word of life and that all shall inherit it. Saying that to hide love is to hide the wind, to find love is to gather wind in the fists, to fail love is to bring forth wind, that dirty pictures are molten wind and confusion. Saying that to lie down in the wind is to be snuffed up like dragons, that to turn back upon it is to dry up her fruit, that to fail her is to bind up the wind in her, that the vehement wind of undoing shall rebuke the frail souls of hesitancy. Saying that the wind blows where it lists but that by reason of it and by its windy doctrine the wind should not blow on the earth. Saying not only the airy question, but saying there might be an answer.

And the stars in their fierce delicacy singing what can be answered and therefore done. That vast ceiling of sparkling

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jewels, vast in its mass and artifice, vast beyond human kind's excessive grasp, vast enough to allow the dubious structures that presumably determine our fate, vast enough to allow the frail eye to find there a galactic excuse for its own failings, vast enough to allow the eye to see Camelopardalis, Auriga, Taurus, Perseus, Cassiopeia, Pegasus, Aries, Cetus, Sculptor, Aquarius, Capricornus, Equuleus, Lacerta, Cepheus, Cygnus, Aquila, Scutum, Hercules, Draco, Corona Borealis and the Drinking Gourd instead of the Walrus, the Giraffe, the Kangaroo, the Seal, the Great Panda, Cheetah, Gnu, Unicorn, Rhino, Platypus, Eagle, Oriole, Robin, Violin, Sitting Bull, Leather-Stocking, Teddy Roosevelt, Tennis Racket, Washing Machine, Model-T Ford or Bottle of Budweiser. They seemed to sing, in their vastness, that answers are and can be known if the will be ready and the heart give itself to the problem at hand. They seemed to sing a skyblue permit for that which must be done. They seemed to say in their timeless mixing, "Go ahead, kid. It's in the stars." With the heavens as witness and reason, Sky turned to his warm girl and spoke, spoke that the night might enclose sense, spoke that the mob of senses and passions might find the right play, spoke that one moment in endless time might be done up right. Spoke that she might stop refusing his kisses and his hand.

Thus by that river, into the wind and for the stars, Skyblue spake into the teeth of time. "Listen, Millie. I wandered today upon Slate Hills and watched Sand Creek below. And I saw that the greenness is gone from the grass and trees. The season of mellow fruitfulness is over. The harvest is almost over and so is the Summer. Everything seemed so full, full and ready to end. The savage sun plowed into the helpless soil. No more of that laughing springtime light that was warm and melting. None of that gentle day that dances on the hills. No amorous breezes. No smiling sun. No sirree, Millie. The wind grabbed that ground and spun it as if it hated its beauty, as if it hated that it could once be green. The wind's fist punched the fields beneath the running sun. It seemed as if there was some panic in it all to get it all over with. I thought then of the tender night with you in it. I thought in that hastening sun there was

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fear, but also it brought me closer to you. In the angry glare of the day, I thought of the whispering rain, the watchful stars, the brooding night, caressing breezes, the babbling creek and you. I thought in the biting light of tingling constellations, shivering moons and the messages in your flesh.

"When I saw all that force to end all that beauty, I thought how you are not of, for or by that. You see, Millie, you're the flower and jewel of the poems. You're the violet that is the sign of purity. You're the crocus that shines among the snow. You're the hyacinth that spangles the Spring, the daffodil that nods to heat, the tulip that sifts into Summer's trance, the pansy that trembles in the creeping moon. You are the marigold that glows, the lily that lifts lilting leaves, the lilac that likes old Hesperus and the thrush. You are the daisy that crowns the hill. You are the chrysanthemum that christens late Summer. You are the queen of flowers, the lovely rose that goes. And you are more. You are the pearl, the head of purity. Lapis lazuli for lips. You are the radiant emerald that loves the neck. You are the beryl set like eyes between the breasts. You are the blood of rubies that crown each breast. You are the sapphire of the stomach and the opal of the hip. You are the agate of the ankle, the garnet of the knee. You are the amethyst of the thigh. You are the diamond in the rough. You are the topaz of centuries, the turquoise of time, the jade of eternity.

"Those poets knew what they were talking about, Millie. They wrote a lot about what women are like and they ought to know. And they wrote, Millie, how things pass away, how beauty dies when it ain't used. They wrote a lot about that. And they wrote about it because they wanted the woman they loved to be remembered forever. They called it bestowing immortality. That's what poems do and who knows but that I might, some day, write one for you. They knew that beauty dies and they die and only the art remains. Think of it, remembered love, remembered beauty, never forgotten, never dead.

"It's all tied up with the way the year works. There's Spring when things grow and get green. There's Summer

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when things ripen and get harvested. There's Fall, coming soon, when things get old. There's Winter when they die and stay dead. The poets, Millie, say that it's art and the love in art that makes that horrible time end. It's love that makes things go beyond the death in the cold. You remember, don't you, how it was last Spring when we met at the band concert. You had on a white dress with green plants on it, with a ruffle around the neck. The gauze sleeves and the high belt. And your hair that came down to your collar had a band in it made up of leaves and small flowers. You held up the front of your skirt as you walked barefoot among the trees with the sky so blue and the blue western wind in the trees, the wind that pulled the thin dresses of the girls. Your lips were quick and red, your eyes grey-blue and you were sternly smiling. You were the Spring itself because, despite your silence and your uppityness, you were the love out of the cold. Out of the dead year you came with your quiet tickling and smooching. That's what it is that gets it all going again after it has been stopped for a while.

"That's like life too. I mean the year's like life itself. You have your Spring, which is now when we're eighteen. You have your Summer, which is like marriage and middle age. You have your Fall which is old age. And you have your Winter which is death. Some people have tried to avoid that business, but it can't be done. They ended up as voices, or withered to nothing. They end up suffering more than if they'd died in the first place. It's right and good that life is that way. It's right and good where we are and what we do because we're part of it all. This is the springtime of our lives. What lies ahead isn't pretty.

"You hear people talk about how life is fading fast away and how there's silver threads among the gold. You hear them say how someone will always be bright and fair to someone else. You hear old people talk about love's old sweet song, about the hours of long, long ago that were spent in the Red River Valley and love spent there amongst flowers. You hear them talk about dim shadows where love's song is the sweetest song of all. You hear their soft voices say

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how they'll never be parted from each other, how they'll lie down beside each other for that last final sleep. You hear their cracking tongues talking about night shadows falling and how some kind of special rest will come to them. You hear their peeling lips whisper "alleluia" that the strife is over and the battle done. You hear their rotting throats wailing for someone to abide with them when darkness oozes over and into their dim eyes. You hear their rattling chests at the gravesides of the dear departed, now rotting, carcasses, trying to pray or sing their way out of the thought of corruption. You hear their shivering voices begging that death be good, that their houses be in order, that their corpses be bedecked with Christ's blood, that the way to the cool grave be but a short step. You hear their cracked cries filled with lights going out, clock hands spinning, death sweetened by the right evidence, God's time is the best time, last hours striking, disappearing of earthy nobility, seeing ourselves as we really are when death puts before us a movie of all our worst sins, blessed goings home, guests on earth, heaven bathing the laborer with eternal rest, angry and false earths, names written in the book of life, beggings for grace while sinking into the ground. You hear their dim wailings about flesh disappearing, rhinestone Jerusalems in the sky, a handful of dirt, marriages with worms, soft restfulness in the silence, the devil's power and eternal pain, stinging and thorns of death, death's foul breath, pilgrimages to corruption, the creator and sleeping kids, getting lamps ready and filling them with oil, the trumpet across the stream of death, going that lonesome valley alone, little children and loving wives left in tears and debt, burning brows and aching heads and perfect peace. You hear, if you listen closely when they sing about that one sweetly solemn thought that comes again and again, how their voices quaver on Jerusalem the Golden—because of fear, because no matter the song, no matter the verse, no matter the prayer, no one wants to lose this love in the garbage pile inside a casket. That one clear call, that sunset and evening star, that sweet reign of light and love, that darkness now on land and sea descending —all add up to terror.

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"It's all a lie, Millie. It's all crap. It's all talking, singing, praying, writing poems, whatever, in order not to have to see what really happens. When we die, Millie, we rot. We turn to filth. Our bodies are no longer bodies because there is no life. No longer is there thought, feelings, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling. No longer is there the hand on the body, the lips against each other, the fresh whisper in the ear.When death comes and we are laid in that box in the cold hole, our feet shrivel to the bone. Our ankles bend in odd directions. Our knees and thighs collapse. Our hair shreds, our eyes shrink, our lips flake away, our necks twist, our shoulders wilt, our breasts drop off, our stomachs sink, our guts burst. Our love lies buried under stinking filth.

"Think of those old women who sit on Main Street every Saturday night and eat vanilla ice cream cones and gossip. Think what they're like and you get an idea of what's ahead. Your hair thins out and your scalp itches. Your forehead gets cracks in it. Your nose runs all the time. Your false teeth slip and slide along shrinking gums. Your neck sags into big blobs of fat. Your breasts dangle to your waist. Your stomach hangs out like a bloated hog. Your guts flop into your lap when you sit down. Your hips inflate into flab. Your feet flatten out. Your ankles swell into basketballs. Your calves and thighs turn purple with varicose veins. Your love lies hidden and dead under the refuse of the body. And what's that hideous carcass for? Well, you can crochet doilies, knit socks, stitch quilts, cook mashed potatoes and boil corn, sit on Main Street and gossip about the young people walking along the Little Arkansas. You'll die with your town. You'll sit and wait for the last klaxon that signifies that your wait is over. You'll wait for the final whistle that calls time-out forever. You'll squat and gawk into the last night of the eyes.

"Oh, Millie. Don't let it happen. Love now. You've got to pick peonies while you can. Tomorrow they'll all be dead. This is our best age while we're young and blooded. After now, you can live on forever and sit out time on Main Street with a bag of peanuts in your hands and shells and husks in your false teeth. After now, you can go home of a Saturday

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night and sleep in scratchy quilts until you're filed away in an envelope called eternity. After sitting out life, you'll have all the time you want to regret what you didn't do when the time came for it. There's always time for afterthoughts and forethoughts. In fact, I could sit here and manufacture talk about it all for hours. I could tell lovely stories, delicious diddlings of the heart, or graft my vegetable self onto you until we could no longer separate man from woman, jack from jenny, bull from heifer. We could sit here and praise each other's bodies until the dust cools in Nagasaki. We could sit here and fondle our lives until the U.S. gets an intelligent president. We could sit here and swap spit until wars come to an end. But there is not enough time. You've got to use it while you've got it. We will only die, Millie, and in the grave there'll be no sweet stroking of the leg, no sweet opening of the thighs, no sweet rubbing of belly on belly, no sweet and joyful breaking out in love. So, now, Millie, since we can't stop the years, since we can still eat a peach, since we can still part our gentle hair, since we haven't yet measured out our lives in ice cream cones and dirty gossip, we must while we're still able. Since we can't stop the coming of still, cold age, let's watch that advent in our sweetness. Let's run with the spinning suns and moons until the vast stars, the dark night and the sweetness of our braided hearts are one and the same in a love that will not let us go. Let's hide our sweet hearts from the teeth of tomorrow in that which feels no time. I mean, Millie, let's love now in the beauty of the rose."

Having spoken, Skyblue arose and stared fiercely across the Little River, stared across at the Santa Fe tracks, the straight grain elevators, the worm-riddled elms, the ice house and the tar bubble streets. Then he looked up through the branches of the Kit Carson tree and shook his fist at the dingle-dangle stars, shook his fist at the F.W. Woolworth constellations, pulled one foot out of a mud hole. Then said, "Now, Millie, if you be still there, turn about. Prepare." With that he took off her sandals and helped her to her bare feet, unhitched her green dress, disconnected the J. C. Penney breastworks,

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lowered her panties with a flourish of grumbling guts and stood before her in his bulging Levi's. When Sky had shed his first skin, Millie took his hand away and said, "Come to me quietly. Do not do me injury. Gently Skyblue my Newton buckaroo." With a little cry, the buffalo girl threw herself into his arms, moaning, "Oh sweet boy, love me now." And he decided he would.

Quietly now, Millie lay back upon the tumid earth, the gentle and warm gift of the dirty creek, and spread for Skyblue that which she had not spread before anyone before and which Big S. had never had spread before him before. Lay back and spread, prepared a way for him that where she was he might be also. Lay back and the Newton boy eased the Halstead girl until she winced and winked into womanhood. Thus naked on the sand, face to face under the blanket of wind, dust and stars, they waltzed that primeval waltz that is the thorn. Nude to nude, they undulated under that tree once violated by Kit Carson until Millie sagged in the loins and Sky sagged in his chest, until, ear to ear and hand to hand, they played once more that first ditty. Lost in the oblivion of that one first thing, they gave and took that pristine contract. With hallelujahs in their youthful limbs and hearts, they sheathed the burning sword. They came to that first morning with the bland ecstasy of the Annunciation. They stalked the will of the world with the caustic lunge of the tauromach. They tickled up St. George and the Dragon until, with simple sighs and wistful puffs, a single tear rolled slowly from Millie's left eye, slid down her downy cheek, trembled, pendant, below her ear, and fell into the dust—startling the leader of an army of chiggers advancing toward her warm interstices.

As Sky lay there on Millie, who lay on the warm hump of earth which lay on the thick loam by the oily creek which lay on the great Earth which lay in the gravity field of the sun which lay in the galaxy which lay in space which turned back on itself to where Sky lay bare-ass to the mosquitoes, suddenly he saw fun falling into place. He heard the rhymes of Here Comes a Duke, how he invited the maid out into the flowers

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of May. He saw again the lifted skirts against the enemy, the ogre, fair Margaret of The Enchanted Princess. He listened evenly as William Wastle was told to "get off my new castle." He twanged the strings as they spun clear for Cat's Cradle. He watched the blatant fall of Drop the Handkerchief. He stood once more for "Come, Philanders, let's be a-marching," "Come, neighbors, the moon is up" and "Come, all ye young men, in your evil ways." He felt trapped again in "Hath she feathers?" He desperately called out the claptrap of Bachelor's Kitchen. He sweated once more at the threat, "Take it off or I'll knock it off," of Club Fist. He flipped to win in Cherry Pits. He shivered in the darkness of patient Hide and Seek. He raced forward to Kick the Can. He heard his name whispered for Call Ball and Charley Barley. How it all made sense now—the polished thighs of Musical Chairs, the pneumatic bounce of Hop Scotch, the rubbery palms of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush, the tight trap of "Bounce around, my sugar-lump," the vagrant laughter of Comes, It Comes, the quacking play of Duck, Duck, Goose. How it all seemed final now—the exhaustion of King of the Mountain, the watery collapse of Charlestown Bridge, the paired end of Barley Break, the giggling of "Husty Fusty is defunct," the animal entrapment of Black Spider, the fingered back of Under the Cuckoo's Nest. How it all fell into place—the last marble of Chinese Checkers, the last peg of Cribbage, the last capture of Chess, the end of chaos with the last word of a Crossword Puzzle.

After the event, Sky helped a damp Millie to her feet and cleaned the sand from her rump and back with three quick swipes of his trembling hands. No more talking now. No more fondling. Just awe in Millie and lily thoughts spinning through Skyblue's taurine emptiness. Sky dressed and helped her put her sandals and dress back on, fumbling in the darkness with the eccentric buttonholes. When they walked out from under the Kit Carson tree, Sky picked up her underclothes with two left fingers, held them away from his nose, and, as they crossed the swinging bridge, tossed them into the dreary creek so that they could paddle to the sea, so that they

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could head back to the mother of us all, so that the water could take a J. C. Penney message around the world, so that he could share with the fishes of the ocean the smells and tastes of the various seepages, rub-offs and drippings of the Halstead girl. Then into the gossiping wind, across the weedy right of way and over the still warm rails and ties of the Santa Fe. And South on Chestnut Street and back to the tennis court. There on that tennis court, or concrete, Sky bestowed one final patronizing kiss, watched Millie head out toward the buffaloes and then himself stumbled eastward over Main, past Spruce, Pine and Walnut, past the road to Wichita, stumbled eastward, finding the streets badly lit and the country road as dark as a black cherry.

Walked east along those fierce country roads in the heavy darkness, walked on ruts and ridges, stumbled across clods. Walked east in the hour of the farmer's dog, when he is most surly and vicious, fought him off with rocks and dead branches. Guided on his way by the high weeds in the ditches. Walked east into the final teeth of the night. Walked east out of love and into the hate-filled blackness. No wings of music enchanting, no melodies haunting, just chittering of restless birds, the snarling collies, scratching coolness. Walked east toward Newton, that deadpan of Protestant racism, that Bible Belt hate for blackness, that town of whips and rocks and shacks for Negroes, that burg of prayerful self-righteousness, until cockcrow and false dawn, until light began its fragile glow, so sure and yet slow, like a fungus, like mold.

As Sky walked with martial tread into the dead of night, straining every nerve not to fall into the arms of Morpheus, trying to remain cool, calm and collected before the deadly menace of the unsleeping, Argus-eyed dogs, it suddenly dawned upon him that he was about to see the first light of day. In utter darkness, slowly but surely he knew that the whirligig of time would once again fill the aching void of his midsummer madness, would once again present the supreme moment when the strapping wench, the eternal feminine, the lady-like dawn, would step out onto the dark stage, trailing clouds of glory, stretch her legs, and let fall the mantle of

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darkness from the bosom of the sky. He knew that she would be dressed to kill, be every inch a queen, be a sight for sore eyes, be a sight to make glad the heart of Skyblue. He knew that behind the scenes where silence reigned supreme she was getting ready to put her best foot forward, to show a bold front, to make a clean breast of the dictates of the heart, to cut and thrust with diabolical skill. In the eloquent silence that creature of fancy was putting the finishing touches on the naked truth.

When the supreme moment arrived and the curtain of the night parted before that howling wilderness, that fair sex, every son's mother, came on the scene with rubbing step and slow. Into his brown study stepped by fits and starts that which seemed to be at loose ends, that which hung in the balance from top to toe, that which seemed to hang together by a thread in some mysterious way. Oh how her limpid glance and sealed lips recalled to Sky the days that are no more, especially when the mantle of night slid from her bosom to her finger tips and was thrown to an assistant in the wings of time. Straight from the shoulder it fell, past her long black gloves and her untimely end. Having dropped her cloak and peeled off her gloves, she warmed to her work by making her gloves into a giddy vortex, by spinning them in a vicious circle, by holding them in her whip hand, twisting them around her little finger and throwing them away until they vanished into thin air. Next, gyrating and twitching, going the way of all flesh in thrust and parry and in ups and downs, she showed Sky the shape of things to come when she threw her black beret into the ring as further contribution to the disjecta membra. Sky couldn't believe his eyes when she made a clean breast of things by pulling the strings of her threadbare excuse in any shape or form. It was a hotly contested ringing down of a curtain, to be sure, since the bow had two strings. It was a consummation devoutly to be wished and beyond belief. Still, it was a labor of love that shed new light on the subject, and Sky heard the call of the wild when she got down to bedrock. She was a little thin on top, Sky thought, but he stood in awe while lending a helping hand to

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clear the decks of the fons et origo at the bottom of her heart. There at Skyblue's fingertips was the halcyon light standing head and shoulders above his stiff upper lip. How his eyes were dyed in the wool. How it tugged at his heart strings when she turned the other cheek and showed him that vulnerable spot. How that grand finale cleansed his bosom for the cold light of reason. How the stretching of her legs and the other circumstances over which she had no control gave short shrift to his hearty applause. Skyblue was unfit to hold a candle to that leading light, that cheek by jowl darkening of the door. To make a long story short, it was an incontrovertible fact that dawn on its last legs had to be handled with kid gloves because it was of the earth, earthy, and because it was after Skyblue's own heart, who was the captain of his soul.

As the dawn departed from the stage and as Sky approached Newton, the rosy-fingered sun reached up across the Santa Fe tracks and the rail mill to give the high sign to the watchers of the dying night. The fingers of light and then the arms of the sun reached up and around to embrace antique terra firma and to pick out the stars one by one, taking out those tapers clear without number, snuffing the jeweled constellations, sticking his fists through yonder window, feeling his way into the gaping hole of the west. His gawking face, his neck and his auroral shoulders arose next, came over the bleary-eyed horizon. The chest, the navel (oh wonderful sunspot), his guts, his thighs, his knees, calves and his scabby ankles rose until there he stood flat-footed on the eastern horizon, rubbing his eyes, scratching his rump with his rosy fingers and hawking a night's post-nasal drip into his mouth, caressing it with his hairy tongue and then spitting it (splat) into the sink of the day.

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John Wieners

To Billie Holiday's *If I Were You*

did I swing in downtown bistros
as a black girl, what would my ancestors say,
even in Africa I was punished

Well, what can you do,
it was great fun while it lasted,
a maroon blue gown out of the fourteenth century,

approaching since memory,
under stained glass chancelleries, oh, yes,
the morning promised

Tuesday afternoon tea dances,
on Churchill Street and the men drove up
to slice off my thighs

and make me jitterbug in black nylon stockings,
singing in a side bedroom, where my sister and I slept
alone, while I wanted *A La Vieille Russie*

on Fifth Avenue, under a wall of fan magazine photographs.

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After Reading *Second Avenue*

for Frank O'Hara

As a jar of Tibetan snow, you melted
at mid-summer, without worry or woe
laughing a way out of disaster
to mock its undertow. Even though

Some of our friends did go ahead
to arrange celebration for that occasion
and some downed since, who toasted
you on arrival, out of frustration

with us here, yes your heart paved a way
divinities erected by cosmopolitan incline.
Names unforgotten, faces etched through blond gravure,
how may they persist, except such mode endure.

2.

A special sense of metropolitan tableaux
trespassed within us, that has
slowly crumbled away since
we haven't seen one another for years

mortared at the New School, or standing supper
in Moi Guy's on Second Avenue
I shan't call by telephone

to mourn the fact you went to Fire Island
over a long weekend, leaving me ruffled
with absence, to a movie on the East Side

at a cocktail party at Morris Golde's.
You were so kind to me, where
I first had lox, & other delicacies

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No, there'll be less gossip of movie stars,
as you have written somewhat well
but that is dangerous, I know

and beers at Joe's, above *Die Wursthaus*
nor more parodies in nasal inflection.
Some tone of town gone, some society curse.

3.

Language a power that claps its lid on a poet,
controls our lives suddenly engenders investigation.
As lovers we found ourselves together in a Turkish bath, I never went
that time you asked, I don't know why.

Past resurrection, aspiring theatrical profession
one must submit to speech, when we were in South Station
you shall be forever of my heart. Behind my eye-lids,
I have your books, your mouth to remember me as well.

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Stephen A. Canada

Rain

In bars of cement light
Orange suns chain across the sky

After the consuming rain
Blistered our mouths
Leaves fell and layed on one another

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Bird

A heavy bird in flight ripples
To baby crystals, baby birds
Fly through the thick light

Listen to the window be
Cause you can see through it

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Poem

Did you see blood
On his shoulder,
Strange dust?

The ancient customs of a gracious people

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The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium

Harry Mathews

I

...confidence in my words, Twang. I suck my tongue for your chervil-and-lavender flavor.

This afternoon I went to the Beach to see a new hotel, the Brissy St. Jouin. It has been described as the "Naples ultra" of Miami splendor. There is teak sawdust in the Oyster Bar, where I began my tour with a screwdriver ; the lobby is decked with much gold. That was all I saw. La Nosherie, the Mannikin Pis rumpus room, and the Jupiter Seaside Fungus Collection had to wait for another visit.

What arrested me, ankle-deep in peacock feathers, was a battery of television sets assembled for the inauguration as a "monument to intercontinental awareness." Above the lobby fountain, seven sets rose vertically from a spray-shrouded base. On either side of the midmost screen, three others were horizontally aligned, hung by transparent cords from the distant ceiling. No sound from the construction reached the naked ear; but telephones, each equipped with a panel of buttons, connected viewers to the various programs. Stopping to sample this profusion of "light inscribed by light," I stayed until I had exhausted the repertory.

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From the top of the vertical rank, the highest set showed a program from Paris, a children's spelling bee. A little boy carefully chalked the word *batrimoine* across the blackboard of a classroom where a dozen schoolmates, mainly girls, sat watching him. They laughed at his mistake. The West is mad. I could not live without your words, no matter how you spell them.

A documentary emanating from Indonesia appeared on the set beneath. The subject was a celebrated Balinese *gamelan*. There were close-ups of the instruments demonstrating their use, then a series of stills of the entire orchestra: taken over eighty years, the photographs faded each into the next to form an animated historical image. Throughout it the instruments neither moved nor changed, while the performers aged steadily and from time to time were suddenly replaced. Shots of the current fighting followed. I thought of the *kuchi* playing for us their reedy serenades, as we ate your delicate slop-rice.

At the end of the left-hand arm of the assemblage I tuned into an advertisement featuring the Indians, a baseball team. Players were seen on the field, then in a kitchen eating "Mateotti's pizzas." Baseball is like *zem*, except that a ball is used.

To the right of this I watched an American film broadcast from Hawaii. The sound track was dead. A man in nineteenth-century dress was seated at a table, eating from a bowl of pears. After a while he pushed the fruit away, used a finger-bowl to wet his lips and forehead, then took up a quill pen and began writing on a rough-edged page. The camera followed his hand as it traced the words, *O say, can you see...* I passed the consulate today. The Cow of Plenty was snapping prettily in the breeze.

On the adjacent set I briefly switched on a popular mathematics congress in Florence. The subject was psychic topology, so rapidly discussed I could not even follow the English translation. By Florence I mean Florence, Italy.

Russia held the place of honor at the crossing of the vertical and horizontal ranks. I witnessed part of a biological experi-

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ment. For ten minutes the screen was filled with the front-face close-up of a cat. Every few seconds a white arc momentarily quivered between the tips of its moustache. A mild hum accompanied the toy lightning. The cat lay quiet, shifting its eyes from side to side. *Amour, amour, quand tu nous tiens...*

To the right a local quiz program was being transmitted. It took place by the swimming pool of some Beach hotel, perhaps the Brissy St. Jouin itself. I listened to one exchange. "In what year did Captain Kidd begin his career of piracy?" "Uh... he turned out in 1697." "Correct!" The contestant was thrown into the pool. The weather has been chilly these past days, with the north wind.

Next to this came an advertisement illustrated by flights of the eagle owl swooping on its prey. (I want nothing, except one thing.)

At the right of the horizontal rank, I watched an Indian movie about the tribulations of a lamb lost in Calcutta. The lamb's innocence so touches those it encounters that butchers and starving men befriend it. The film made me hungry.

Switching to the set underneath the electrical cat, I viewed a performance by the Peking Opera of *Russlan and Ludmilla*. I waited until the end of the canon for Ludmilla's father. How is Bamma Deng?

The screen below was blank, glowing with creamy light. The program was supposed to be from Pretoria. A flat voice recited a love poem.

Below, an English documentary enlightened with X-rays the murky functionings of the womb, including parthenogenesis. The colors were scrumptious.

Finally, the lowest set showed a program from Cairo. Presented against a background of local music and dance, its subject was the circular bread of Egypt. We learned of its usefulness when fractioned in making sandwiches, even with soup.

An old man standing nearby engaged me in conversation when I set down my earphone. He wore blinding beach attire and carried a basket of comb shells on one arm. Under the other an unfamiliar receptacle caught my notice. The old

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man answered my stare with the words, "This is a pilgrim's flask, such as was carried by those who journeyed to Santiago de Compostela." Turning back to the television assemblage he pointed out to me, at its very summit, the blue-and-white figure of a cherub. "Do you think it's one of the della Robbia gang?" The cherub leaned winsomely on a cittern that had been tilted to one side, and held aloft a triangular plectrum. We chatted long enough to exchange names; then I decided to go home. I was getting dizzy from the six thousand dozen roses banked against the lobby walls.

Miami looks so vertical and unimaginative after the dusky lateral circular something of your village—it was like a shiny wooden nut dish. I have been quiet, mostly. Dan had a party to celebrate the end of Lent. He gave it early—on Good Friday—because it was to be "different." It wasn't. Such occasions leave me feeling like a beaten mark. I come to them filled with high spirits that are quickly and indifferently taken from me. It doesn't matter. My hopes are unquenchable. I feel that I stand on the brink of lofty exchanges that will make the ills of life ridiculous. After each respite, even a nap, we can all meet each other as gods. I have entrusted my life to expectation, as if the bud would surely blossom. I can only live this way.

Have sent the money you need. Isn't it lucky that you were born in an Italian colony?

I was right: the name figures in the "hypothetical lists" of the Donation.

II

April 6

Pan persns knwo base bal. The giappan-like trade-for mishn play with it in our capatal any times. To morrow to work be gin. It 's cleen eccepts for the talk. The in-habits live in draems. To raed this has need, not idees but a tenshn (to-trans-late of Twang): "After a land-like giourney a yuong man-Pan a rive deep in a rest hwere the her of his choise was live in a mall she has make. Green aster hang, man re-sieve no to-

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greet, re-turn to his ghest—there is no re-plies. Rael Zen he is to can make to get a-tention; the stud go to a nother art of rest and biuld his-self yeers. Later, new as-to-weep-like fall leeves, he 's line. He then drop. Every thing run throuh the rest to teech and say, Thank you." Here, is Rome. Your to-write with baeutifl discovory of Miami is a preziate to no end. You are write a bout name—good—then have you found-ed map? Or, are you to can found it? and how do you dou? The one-most inter-lohutor of Twang in Rome is a boy-child whowho say in playce of my way, but, in italian, "Dont stop me, I giust raech 6,523,281" and go on to count, sit-ed on the steppes of the Graet Squaer. So brothr, my mynd hargo of love seek you one-most in one deriction, then in a second derection, then in a 3rd derexion, then in a forth direction, like wise up ward, dwon ward, and all-round, the sence of to-love-like minde in-fusion all thing with no limit, no narrow, no to-hate, no ill desire. You care for mor Zen storys. It 's un-easy to write them, with this dificint languague, and they so pleyn; yet here is one. And I sey, "Goodbye, *neng* of Twang."

III

April 11

Divine testimony is the best, and your letters bristle with Eleusinian truths. By them I know I exist, even if I would rather you proved it by digging your nails into my palms, or your toe into my flank. So I believe you blindly—I believe you when you say I am a *neng*; but you must step out of the holy fire to tell me why.

That old man I met at the Brissy St. Jouin called three days ago. Would I join his party on a visit to Panoramus? Next morning we gathered into two cars for the drive. It was nice, in a dismal way. Our highways are now paved with a material that when warmed by the sun emits a smell of fresh bread; the worthy effect is destroyed by a nostalgia for neighborhood bakeries. The ugliness of the state of Florida also depressed me. It appeared concave rather than flat, and the mean

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age of the inhabitants glimpsed by the roadside was at least seventy-one. Panoramus was no different. It is the shelling capital of the universe, its beaches are lined with old, avid hobbyists stooping endlessly. My host came over to ask if I was glad to be there and then attached himself to me for the day, whisking me along the beach, leaving me not the smallest chance for a drink. The shore was messy. A wealth of mostly broken shells was diversified with fish skulls, medusa carcasses, and used containers. We searched for new-moon shells and picked beach roses and violets. Then, although the mercury was low, I went for a swim. The salty water stung like fire and I didn't stay in long; just long enough to open one foot on a can. We proceeded to the Shell Museum cafeteria for a lunch of roast lamb, beans, and leaf-and-fruit salad. (That's how the dishes were listed. A blind man would have had difficulty naming them, since they were as odorless as if frozen, which they partly were.) At the end of the meal a black girl, moving in an ethereal or at least ether-like cloud of vetiver, arrived to guide us through the museum. "You shall be the two millionth visitor of our conchological collections," she sweetly said to me, ending a vague hope that I might cop a heel. I know I sound ungrateful, but I kept my feelings to myself. (And O my dearest, I cannot look at anything, even a collection of shells, without turning my thoughts towards you. My time is never wasted. Thanks to the serene passion within me, and the ministry of the post office, there is nothing in the world that does not commemorate you—girls who are beautiful and black because you are beautiful and lemony, the smell of the sea because of your landlocked mother's broths, greyhounds at the track because of your sister's hands at her shuttle, the pavements of roads because I wish they led me to you. Even garbage helps me recall, although of course it is too tame to match, the fumy litter of your markets.) Smiling, she took me by the hand and led me through the museum, where we inspected bearded conchs; shells used to make purple dyes; an Indian shell shield from pre-Columbian times; shell sculptures by local artists (e.g. "Nessus abducting Dejanira.") Afterwards we went back

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to the beach. I watched a greyhound bitch sniffing after wristwatch-size brown crabs that kept sidling off into the wavelets, leaving her unseeing and perplexed. There was lightning out to sea. On the drive home I had a talk with Mr. Dexter Hodge, a very class person whom I have met once before. He told me that he had been accosted outside the cafeteria by a guitar-strumming lad who proposed taking us to a cockfight.

As to your questions: I do not have the map and it is not certain that I shall find it. The Donation I mentioned is a collection of 19,000 old maps smuggled over in 1966 from the Maestranza in Havana. The object of the theft was to exploit the treasure-hunting craze by selling the maps, but the State of Florida impounded them and deposited them for safekeeping in the University of Miami library. They have never been catalogued, but lists of possible origins have been compiled. A number of maps came to Havana from Santa Catalina, after the fort there was dismantled; and since the archives of the fort record our captain's hanging in 1537 and the seizure of his effects, his name appears on one of the lists. This means only that *if* he had a copy of the map, it *may* be here.

It's the season when worms start spinning cocoons, in the north the crows are leaving the woods, the snows of the past melt and the eyes of men become unstuck. I go on blinking in your perpetual spring light. You have made the eyes I look through. Abstract convergent lines orient the fractions of my world to a point beyond the horizon that may well be your navel. I may not sense this at every moment, any more than I smell the hairs inside my nose, but at the end of each minute or day I remember happily that it is so. Only occasionally do I think of you in a distracted way (longing), and the milk on the hob boils over.

IV

April 15

Amortonelli have-make be fore crime-like hystery, a satir a gaints Pope-most *Clement VII* (Medici). Be fore, there was any thing to

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find out from a bibliotheck near. That man is truth-like to you in to-tell the briggand ave the end-most days in Rome. It was can for Twang to find a paper near 1600 whiwhich say: *of-Amortonelly* to-wrotes in Vatihan bibliotec. And is can look soon at its. Years, and *G. A. Medici* is re-turn and *Pius For*. He awllays buy penshn to Amor-tonelli, lest perpaps his verse buyt him. So, hwen my not-to-exist grub-like flesh pass, there is fear lest one late-er be book worm bluynd and dark. Yet is to-fire a stic or few of in sense be in-sureance to proteck me lest cruel re birth? Once, yess, a lama-most munk of Tibett, whowho have-eat cheazes with graet love, and he in deth be then a chease worm. Onemost, *neng* have sense nose, that wish to say, nose to have thought on when one squatt and moove a way thouhgt; then, Buddha's nose. O yass, there be my puprose to learn like, in a dark roome, the lihgt of lamp with to-shatter obscurety, with to-give and to-scatter ligt, so that discovery then there will pomp a way the shaddw of darks-nesses and schatter the ligth of to-know, and like too, the lihtg of our re-lation with the advance in to the darkmosts of this world, things one after one light until all are glod. The crime-full poet has come here soone after in-Italy, and stay until dead 1561, eccept wen his *Hardinal Giovonni Ongelo Medici* is ex pulse by *Paol 4*. The nose of Buddha is beatiful and *neng* a rive to sense beautifl thing—you. Any time we say *neng* and non *vin* (cadavar) to make confort to the hadavers.

V

April 20

I have lately felt as though I were wading through a deserted desert. I know it's only a little while that I haven't seen you, and again in a little while I shall see you... meanwhile my mind's mouth has been dry. The research is discouraging, there are so many maps, full of flattened bugs and dust, each to be laboriously unfolded, then refolded. Our captain's career has rubbed off on none of them, and my only "fact" is still this: the name given to me by the Red Arrow man (I'm sure of it because I wrote it down) is identical with one on the Donation list. The work is also slow, since it has to be done

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after office hours. My colleagues started complaining that I was becoming "withdrawn." They mustn't guess the truth.

Then this afternoon, walking toward my bus-stop, I had a brush with Nemesis. I was passing a tidy speckled-egg bungalow when I saw beyond its Moorish patio, raised above the low wall of a terrace, the peroxide head of my sister Diana. I called to her; the head looked up, and looked away. I crossed the patio for a closer view. The person, who was not my sister, was stretched out beneath the unflattering sun on a pneumatic deck, naked except for a pair of sungoggles. I turned back, too late. "Eve!" she yelled. A tawny watchcat, fierce as a lion and as big as a schnauzer, rose from her side as if winged. Striking my right elbow, its claws only nicked my arm, since the fury of its leap unseamed my coat-sleeve and dropped the beast to the ground. But as you know, I cannot run very fast, and another jump fastened the cat to my shoulders, where it opened six parallel slits in the cloth and flesh of my back, before abandoning me at the patio gate. I ran on, expecting further assault, but only the womanly cry of "Stay away, maniac!" pursued me down the sidewalk.

Can an evil spirit open blind men's eyes? Even as I stood sobbing in the street, and later, while the druggist cleansed and dressed my lacerations, I became aware that I had been brought back to life. My frightful sensations had lifted me above habit into a conscious emptiness where I could begin feeling again. For days I had wallowed in dreams, forgetting what you have made me, charmed by phantasms of my loneliness and its childish yearnings to be soothed—as if we deserved nothing better than to be instantly locked into an everlasting ice cream parlor! Scandal and pain wrenched me awake: then you became absolutely present to me, not for long, but in that time your bodily presence would not have made you more real. I felt your fingers on my face, which was like a blind man's face under their touch.

It's late now. I'm in my office, ringed in maps. To the east a new moon is rising, in the sky I crossed not long ago to have a stranger transfigure my life in the unlikely shrine of the Bangkok airport. Soon this exile will end.

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VI

It 's cruel to be-weep for those dayze and nights, not minites when your to-write come but one time with out end of 2 weeks-long. To be lock to gether in forever lasting ice craem is not as bad a thougt. (I vow, to treatmeant my english!) To-put "we" close "*tharaï*" is all ways hanromy in Pan, in every way—*tharaï* "with no to-end".

The papers of *Amortonelli* are-give in to the Vatican but not long, be cause *Hosimo de' Medici* whowho will-be soon Gran Duc of Toscany I, take them 4–6 months after the brigan dead. *G. A. Medici* is be come Pope but he 's but a north-most Medici, he has a dett to *Cosimo* for to-say he is cousins and all-most a graet tuscan Medici. How full the wish even to see you once mor, see if some marks life give in your face after last we meat each othr. How many dusts to lift to discover that I discover! So many, the small Monsignor Latten, a shortness with jewls, descend from heigths to see and say me more, that in those dayse there is a talk, so: said in the next year daid of paludism, the sons of *Cosimo* kill themself in to-fight a bout the paper of the thief; and this musts mien it is not but sattires? As we mieet it then is un-clear there is some great tendency, you musts put in my hart to to remembem a bout the Banghok air port and the Mister Red Arrow. And do the man-mother of the beests no help your hope with other tells of the tresure, how did he say exatcly? The feeling is, my English not whatwhat it would be—force, be cause all-day takking italian. The litle Paple ociffer say, it 's part of an age-most story.

VII

April 29

Since you again ask, this is how it began. On my way east, after Rome, I was seated next to Mr. Zonder Tittel, a friendly Canadian working for the International Red Arrow, the conservation society. Mr. Tittel was traveling to Indo-China to capture specimens of a wild cow called the coubou, or kubu. Have you ever seen one? It roams the plateaus of south-

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ern Laos in small herds; its only food is the bark of the native apple, which is being girdled into extinction, taking the coubou with it. Until recently no one cared, since the coubou was thought to be only a domestic breed gone wild. Mr. Tittel himself learned otherwise when he examined one animal: "I got a crowbar between its teeth and prised its goddam jaws apart, and there was a mouth two million years old."

Mr. Tittel then asked what had brought me to the Orient. I gave him a short course in Pan history. He was not very interested in the early missionaries or in my plans to microfilm their records in Pan-Nam. But when I mentioned working at the Miami U. library he perked up and began discussing treasure troves. He had heard about the maps from the Maestranza and asked if any of them had proved valuable. I said I had nothing to do with the maps, and that I knew little about buried treasure. He then started telling me about the "craziest" chest of gold in the Caribbean. If only I had listened more attentively! Here are the main facts of his story. I know how remote they must have seemed in those giddy days.

The treasure was hidden, probably in the Florida keys, by the Catalan Jesus María Cabot, captain of *El Paráclito*, and his associate Amortonelli, a Florentine. The ship sailed from Barcelona early in the 1500's, bound for Mexico. Blown off course by a hurricane, it was wrecked on the Florida coast. The partners salvaged and buried a large coffer not far from the wreck, with the help of two members of the crew. When the survivors of *El Paráclito* were rescued, one of the sailors denounced Cabot and Amortonelli; later, however, he failed to identify the hiding-place. The captain and the Italian were arrested, and the former hanged. Amortonelli escaped and is supposed to have returned to Italy.

This is all I "know." It is reasonable to assume that each partner drew a map of the treasure's location. That is why I asked you to look for the map in Italy while I search here. (I have written to the Red Arrow man for a complete account; apparently he is still harrying the Laotian bush.)

At Bangkok we prepared to go our ways; but Mr. Tittel

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had more to teach me. He had hinted at a moon of riches. Now he was to reveal the sun and earth. Spying your *phrap* across the airport lobby, he led me toward you. He said that you were "typically Pan," that you would probably be on my plane, and that you could "help me off to a friendly start. They're such an easygoing people, she won't mind our accosting her. You'll see." He started to address you in the twinkling cadence of your language. You listened patiently, without indifference or interest. I was already collapsing. I tried to be a cliff but sank like swirling pebbles. Your eyes did not move yet swept tides of confusion through me. Then, when you turned to me, your first words ("Hello baby") plunged me into melancholy. I could neither leave, nor believe. If you had noticed that "great tendency" you might have been kind. If you had been kind, the world of dreams would have reclaimed me and ended all hope. It was enough to walk with you to the plane, and sit by you, a glimmer of folded silks.

My first alarm was soon over. I felt that our proximity was now like that of two actors when, after a performance, they drop their masks and resume a spontaneous friendship. But since I had worn a mask all my life, I didn't know how not to act. And you, who had never put on a mask because you are truth itself, could not see that my face was nude. If you had thought about me at all, you would have taken me for an idiot. But you did not seem particularly aware of me until, in Sah Leh Khot next morning, wishing me well, you told me the way to your village.

Meanwhile you abandoned me for the night to the distractions of the *Deuam phap* fair, through which I rode on the emerging whale of my desire. Everything seemed beautiful, if sometimes unfathomable, in the glamor of a race that included you.

I entered the fairgrounds through a gate resembling a huge white N whose left apex has been broken off. On its uprights primitive guns, relinquished by visiting tribesmen, were strung on brass chains. Beyond, a movie billboard announced Ava Gardner in *The Joan Crawford Story*.

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Drifting through the flashing lanterns and loudspeakers, I stopped at a little cinder track where preparations for a footrace were under way. As I approached the group of runners and their handlers, I nearly tripped over a boy who was scurrying on all fours through the crowd. He looked up at me, raised a forefinger to one eye, and pinched my shoe. I glanced around me: six feet away an unlaced boot lay on its side. I picked it up and gave it to the boy. Sidling over to the track, he cunningly substituted it for a similar boot that rested on the starting-line among a dozen others. The boot I had found weighed at least five pounds—it was plainly "loaded." I kept an eye on it, until it was finally put on by a runner wearing the number four. I pushed into the thick of the crowd, where I rightly guessed that bets were being taken, and learned that "four" was the favorite. While I wondered what runner to back, I saw the boy who had changed the boot placing a few *khrot* on "six," and I followed his example. The race started; number four won easily; number six finished last. Pan runners surely do not race with weighted shoes. I had been made to "find the leather," and I paid duly for my greed.

I next stopped to watch a kind of dance, performed on a small wooden platform by a husky old man. The dancer lay on his back or side and applied his legs to his head and shoulders, or his arms to his legs and hips, in slow lurching gestures punctuated by swipes of fist, foot, or knee. Except for the groans of the performer, there was no accompaniment.

Farther on I joined the audience of a shadow play, where willowy puppets moved behind screens of colored silk. The action began with a horde of demon-like figures shrieking around a solitary hut. When the demons withdraw, a venerable man steps out of the hut and sings gently for a while. The leader of the demons approaches him disguised as a beggar. Soon, at his bidding, a vision of viand-laden tables appears. The old man drives the beggar off with a few roars. The demon then returns as a beautiful woman and conjures up another vision, this time of girls dancing. The demon is again repulsed. Then all the demons, chanting in evil chorus, attack

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and steal the old man's pig. As they decamp, a grotesque but benevolent genie rises from the ground, scatters them, and returns the pig.

Did the Italians bring this story to Pan-Nam?

Passing a field where moonlight *zem* was played, I thought I glimpsed you in the crowd, a wishful hallucination. Staring after your shadow I could see no one's features right, and when I tried to paint your face against the gloom, the colors were faint, and troubled by the hollow masks that the night mixed among the living.

Nearby, families of blue-turbaned Nau were selling their traditional comforters, embroidered with tennis rackets, those colonial relics; various roots, of which I bought a sampling; and of course their stinking sea-salt cakes.

Towards the western gate, I observed a native wall-and-ball game. The wall was of soft clay, straight and thick. Equipped with six-foot, spoonlike bamboo bats, two players in turn hurled a wiremesh sphere against the wall, whence it had to be dug out. What is the point of this game? Another couple played against the far side.

My last halt was for the monkey kites. Eight of them, with their busy passengers, were sailing about fifty yards from the ground in agitated proximity. I presume the monkeys have been trained to strike the other kites. Their exasperated cries followed me to the hotel, where I slept fitfully. I was shaken with the memory and anticipation of you; also I couldn't figure how to turn off the light.

In the earliest morning I met you as you were boarding your bus. I could not discover whether inclination or courtesy made you glow in that manner. In irreproachably noncommittal tones you said I might visit you. By then my feelings were clear; when you departed I let myself float into them. As I savored this joy, I felt the miseries of my life crowding down like angry beggars. They did not make me run away, because for the first time I knew I could satisfy them.

(There were other beggars as well, your orange-toga'd monks, cadging their breakfast. This practice seems degrading to us westerners. How can it be thought holy?)

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You wonder if the fight over Amortonelli's papers does not prove them to be other than literary. Remember, literature was then a dreaded weapon. The first Cosimo had Il Burchiello murdered for his sonnets. Not that you are wrong. How could I ever think that you are wrong?

Don't forget to date your letters.

As they say in Pannam: *Duvaï maï*

VIII

May 3

Monsignor Latten say, it-all mixt with the hystory of—then his word fall out from my aer. A gain: "*Quella vecchia storia delle tosature.*" But, wholding the words, I be leave they are italian idiotism, like Amerihans say "trim any body". One moom-time I account my 32 nature-like parts with resbonsipil to-breathe and I get a yas, there is can to be ohter censes. Mons. Latten is not hear, he 's in Luang Pra Bang for the synod. Yet the vocabaruly sur-render the idea for *tosare* "to hlip" that is "clip coins", so *tosature* "clippins"—a per-hap conenction with some traesure? I gioin my to-trouble-book-shelfs to this impusle.

You writ assid, brothr, of *Deuam phap* fair. Pans have ever bronz in ther shoes for to-run. Whowho is quikc-est, put on the haevy est shoose. Nor the old man-Pan on a bed have some need for the musical, be caus he 's in war no dance, one hlaf of man with otter half, a long fihgt. You have say *duvaï maï* but we are not to can say this all-thoug it will-be treu, *duvaï* is fair-well for the long-time, or even deth, it is rwong with *maï* that is now and for-this-moment. You will-say *tharaï* "for-ever" with *duvaï*. Not say-so to Twang! Not tenis raguets are on Nau hovers. They are wulwas.

You have see my gold bonzes "degarding" and you are worng. They have the ful contenpt for materialistist sotiety, to-beg make them free from the strusture. The bal-gaems are to gether a game, one grup here, one group here, the desire is to-get one ball through the wall. In that teatre the old man is the crule man-mother of the sky whowho will non give rain (pig). The heros make grate atcs to have it from, but you

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have-see the hate of the bittr dead get up to give us no thing. When you wait you did-can to see after how they get the pig. The sky-most monekeys have-not-kut the kites but one other. When a monekey is been-kill he homes down. A string is on to the him and not to the kite, and that hite go a way and have no triunf.

I 've the memry of your to-come in my town. Our dog in the under-house likes you, he make the strange woof of tendernes and sensure—*then*, I have interest in you. And hiss. Do not put a way your memery of the litlte money you will send. Do not think, the of-Nau things be roots, they are tirds, yet are OK if you aet only little. I & you; harmnony; peace.

IX

May 8

Good news: yesterday I was given access to a university computer. This should speed up the map work. Lester P. Greek did the favor, during a chance meeting on the library steps. He holds the Finnegans Wake chair in our Comp. Lit. department, runs the municipal television trust, and is supposed to be on the big con.

Don't you think you may be wasting your time in Rome? Amortonelli's papers are certainly in Florence. Why labor after will-o'-the-wisps?

Thank you for correcting my Pan usage. May I point out a similar mistake of your own? In one letter you wrote "forever lasting." One can say "forever" or "everlasting" but not "forever lasting."

It was interesting to learn about the fair.

The bank will forward your money, which I hadn't forgotten. Do you know the amount is exactly what I paid for you, not counting the exemption from field labor? How I miss your village, its lanes of teak and bamboo houses, quiet under the silk-cotton trees! And your house, or Bamma Deng's, the dark cool house by which I often stood, watching the lizards slide over its posts, so unlike my street of blind doors. Even in the shade, the pounding of my blood would

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burst out in horrible sweating, as I waited for a hand...

Could you help reconstruct the events of our wedding day? It's hard for me, because I was so drunk. I don't feel remorse about this: such events are not to be piously hoarded.

By ten in the morning I was already teetering. I remember handing out countless cigarettes to the smiling groups around the stands, decked for the feast with streamers, green candles, and rice brandy.

At some point I spoke to you, or tried to, but you were taken away. I looked into a mirror and saw my face.

There came a slow gathering of people from every direction, like battalions drawing together before battle, or pilgrims at the consecration of a shrine, all eating dried squid and smoking my cigarettes. The alcohol began to ignite my skin; I felt as though I were being flayed. Boys led me to a carpeted area in front of the house, where your mother and aunts were arrayed. A long dialogue began, I think in verse, between your mother and a gnome who had been chosen to speak for me. Did you know him? I understood that he manufactured sundials. It was terrible to fall asleep during this exchange, when I was supposed to be begging for your hand, yet no one seemed to mind. The women's laughter woke me. They weren't laughing at me—what was it they were laughing about? Finally, the gnome left, with whispered words that sounded like "Beware of green wolves!" A bowl of cuprous liquid was set before the women, into which they dropped thistle-like tufts that dissolved in smoke. The chief bonze, who with other monks had chanted drowsily through the morning hours, rose I gathered to assert that the marriage was now proclaimed, received, professed, undergone, and enacted. But the ceremony went on. You were brought down, a small mat was set between us, and there you placed a handful of winter rice shoots, and I a dollar bill. That was the sign that everyone could return to his feasting.

I remember much better, a few days earlier, going up to see you in the opium fields. I had woken early. For a time I tried to read *Birth, Breath, Breast* by Norman O. Brown, but a shrike was singing, so I went over to your father's house to

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ask for your hand. You had already left. The basin where you had washed (publicly but modestly, no doubt, with your *phrap* raised about your ears) glowed in the near-light like a little milky sea. Bamma Deng was sitting on his verandah. I addressed him directly, pleading devotion and honesty against my ignorance of Pan ways. He answered readily and at length, displaying that perfect Italian of his that, down to the charming dissonance of his hard c's, aspirated in the Tuscan manner, suggests rather a lifetime in Florence than a few years' study in a Far Eastern *liceo*. He called me his son, admonished me in sententious periods to trust in God, informed me of the customary rites and obligations, and accepted my proposal. When I told him I had not yet spoken to you, he warned me that his agreement depended on yours. I had hopes of your willingness, and such an abundance of desire that I felt that you could not help sharing it; so I hurried off to find you, stumping up the rooted, gullied path that led to the crown of the hill. Rubbery leaves swatted my sweat- and tear-glazed face. Once I halted to recover my breath and gazed unperceiving over the pulse fields below, gray in the first light. I resumed my ascent at a slower pace, but my feelings banged on within me. I tried to distract myself by naming the innumerable trees that towered confusingly about me over the ferns and wild deutzia bordering my path. Liquidambar, magnolia, padauk, varnish tree... the effort was useless, I was obsessed with your smell and skin. I must have come into the clearing like a slavering lunatic. It was tranquil there. The sun was a yellowish ball in the eastern haze. In its aquarial light you all appeared in dwarfish silhouette, erect or bent as you spooned the droplets oozing from the cropped shoots. At first I could not distinguish you. Your familiar laugh brought me to you. I said that I had spoken to your father and that he was willing that we should marry. Because I could imperfectly make out your features, and you did not at once reply, I was shaken with doubt, and all the intensity of my hope and lust careered toward bitterness. Then you cast away your spoon, and with a soundless flutter dropped to the ground to embrace my feet.

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X

May 12

Listn! I have, how ever, find: coin clippings are-can to be a treazure. 1391 the papa *Bonifacio IX* sell this emty abbazy of Montpelas, that is neighbr-like to Avignon on a edge of of-Antipopoes land. The buy-man is Messer *Todao*, he 's a fiorentine who have a hous in Mont Pelier. He for-get to pay, the pope take his propriety in Florence, of-it is a part a box of gold-most-hlippins with a worht of 37,000 florini! The mother of Twang and the interlocutor of the mother of Twang were-laugh be cause they sing fun-y things to the other. Firts they are to-make a musick-full list of every thing that is like 2 lovrs can not be separate

dust & watter
nale & fingre
oil & carpet
flower & name of-flower
wacks & fire

tehn wehn she have let a end of her to-question:

The ivery pins, the iorn kneedles
—have you brougt them a long?
The umbrellow of parrot-like feather, the *phrap*
of gold-like cloth
—have you brought them a long?
The rynocerous buttr, the of-Japan appels,
—have you brought them a long?

and so otter hard debts, and he answer

We bring a long the ivry pins, the iren neadles &c.,

my mother aks

Muts I give her to you? do you vow to-want-her
even if she ug-ly?
even if she more I 's than teeth?
even if she mmore tethe than hairs?
even if she so pale as the Eureups?
even if she crooket as *bukhaï?* (kind of brush)
even if she drunk in the mournins?
even if she your emeny is her lovr?

and he ansser

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Yas we want her even all-though she be ugl-y &c. and they are-laugh to gether while this be cause I have great respett for I 'm pritty, chaste, and sobre.

My eyes are bend-ed from the to-see old hand scritts and prints and still, I found not *storia delle tosature* with *Amortonelli*, or *Medici*.

My family have all great rispect for much quality, much beauty, and the man-mother and the mother of Twang have no punish-meant from heavn, but it be-stow on these genitors comfrots in lovly symytry, 3 gerls, 3 boys, a gerl, a boy, five gerls, five boys, then a boï and a gerl that is Twang. No one baby die, and we are poor yet we are live in harmony with heaven and under heven. May be you are co-rect, that I maek the end to work here. But there is so much other mathers of your to-write a little, in your most-deer be cause most-new letter—there are so much things hwere I have the same to-feel with a eletricly dellicate clear-ness so I all most have no brath to make my voice strong that the current not be break, and my thought be ex-change only in a part, and your ex-sistence that now is write ovre me so passed mine farthar and nop stop. *Weï weï lemö slop*. Wo-woe the mysyry of love, we say. But it has no so bad a soun be-cause *weï* is "a-las" and "sad-ness", OK, but all-so "to-laugh". You shall for-ever rememer *lemu* be cause it is, "love".

XI

May 17

If Lester Greek runs for Congress he'll have my vote. There is new material at last, thanks to Les's computer. It checked the names of Amortonelli and the captain against one million nine hundred and seventy-two thousand items of information, obtaining one positive response. The document indicated was in San Juan de Puerto Rico. I have already received a copy of it, unfortunately in translation.

Here is the text. Clearly it is part of a letter addressed to the captain on the eve of his sailing from Barcelona. It says nothing of the treasure's location but confirms its presence on *El Paráclito*. The opening is lost.

...to Lyon in the company of the Aretine, whose name

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was Gherucci. On the second day, when I had been crossing the city in her pursuit it thus happened: the watery element, as if it had been drunk up and contained too long, poured down so emphatically that I was forced to creep along like one afraid of the watch close under the overhangs, where the cellar door of a money changer's house being unbarred on the under side, I fell into it head over heels, like a blind man who in an earthquake comes tap-tapping with his cane and falls straight into hell. I fell on straw, that is into silence, such that I heard my own blood. To be brief, I was in a Jew's house, unasked and unperceived. A grave conversation dropped thinly down from a room over me, and I was moved (O destiny) to hear it plainer, and slunk up a stair more ladder than stair, old and ill-fitted so that it would have squeaked my undoing but for the essential dampness of the place, and brought me, light-footed as the lover who treads to a husband's snores, close to the ceiling, that was their floor. Two were speaking, one much, the other no more than as if to nod his head. The first told how he had been sent to inquire about a chest of silk that his master, the Abbot of Montpelas, had discovered unaccountably abandoned, nay hidden even, in a dark corner of the abbey. There was a great quantity of silk in it, taffeta, with a piece of brocade that at one end was embroidered with six crow-like figures, and on the lid of the chest were crudely carved three fish. Diverse and sundry tropes were introduced by the narrator to piece out these few mean facts, and well I knew why, it was wiliness to prick the Jew's interest, for getting money or knowledge out of him I did not understand, and I would not wait either to hear more or to sneeze because my own inquisitiveness was inflamed: I had been thoroughly taught the fame of that treasure that today I told you of; so like a trout climbing a waterfall I wished my body after my soul up through the cellar door, found Gherucci, and that night we made for Montpelas.

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There we stopped little, because the chest was gone. Three sunless crowns slipped into the hand of a fornicating monk found out that it was dispatched to be sold in Barcelona, in the company of two friars less covetous. We followed them, and caught them not until Narbonne. Toward Beziers they progressed and took Fontfroide in their way, although it was clean out of their way, to stay with the Cistercians. They thought it their haven yet it was ours. They must when they left lead their horse and their wagon (drawn by two pumice-gray asses) up a narrow valley where we could fall on them; and so we did, and doing lost all our itching doubts, which as we rode along the sands of Languedoc had like their whining myriad mosquitoes sung in our ears, Is it gold? For the monks answered our threats bravely. They used such unspeakable vehemence a man would have thought them the only well-bent men under heaven. Would they defend taffeta so? Their righteous unbudgingness would have forced us soon enough to arms, when one of them lifted the long brass cross that hung below one hip and struck Gherucci, who had dismounted, so great a blow his head opened and he fell agonizing to the ground, sprawling and turning on the stained grass like a fish newly plucked from the stream, and we thus came to arms even sooner, I mean too soon. I knocked the other of them from his horse and leaped down on him, whereupon he cleverly slit my thigh with a poniard from under his skirt, as he rose. I thought, "Mark the end," and killed him after he had run a few steps. He fell into a shrub of flowering thyme so that he died sweetly. Not a moment lost, but I got to my horse to detach my arbalest: the first monk was away, and the cart with him, I armed, sighted, shot, and caught him fair, yea and so fair that had he not been impelled by the greatness of his goods he would have stayed. He went out of my sight with the quarrel protruding from his shoulder, like a brown pear stuck with a clove. Will men suffer thus for taffeta? No more

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than for hearthwood or cider apples, then they give up their little store and live, as the beaver pursued bites off his stones for the hunter to gather up, and lives quiet. Heavens bear witness with me it is so (but heavens will not always answer when they are called.) The uncocking of the shaft had given our horses a mind for exercise. I could not follow, and meditated upon my bloody thigh to devise what kind of death it might be, to be let blood until a man die. It is the same as if a man shall die pissing, with this thought I muffled my wound with cloth, got after my horse, and set out to catch the stalwart monk. Gherucci I left unburied, in his clotted hair.

Slowly with my leaden ache, hardily with my golden desire, I journeyed five days through a country full of shrill-breasted birds but empty of traveling monks, though one left a plain trace. I saw his corpse at the convent here. They had sold the chest, but gave me no aid to find it: at last I came to your ship, where it is buried, like Christ among the common bones, under a load of corn.

That the treasure must lie where it is, I readily admit, for the hours are too few to bring it up without setting every beggar and the Count of Barcelona on our necks. Yet I will not abandon it finally, but beg that you take me on your ship. We shall be partners in ambition and glory, your capital is your captaincy and that the gold will be under your absolute sea sway; mine is telling you so, and telling no one else. The account, which I have delivered to you part spoken and part in this letter, will (I trust) have sufficed to convince you that I do not talk of wax-and-parchment proposals. Should you ask, why do they send such wealth to the new world, I believe its notoriety is too vicious to bring it into daylight without there being knowledge of it, and danger and blame to the church; but the fables of Mexican gold will be accounted an honorable womb for its rebirth, when it has there been melted and fashioned into new bodies.

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Alas, that the coffer lies under such a night-storm darkness of grain, you cannot see it (nor touch nor take nor spend). To have faith without sight is hard, but you must have it. Why should I mislead you? If my words are empty, you will toss me naked to the fish, or hang me in pieces on an Indian palm. You will learn that I speak the truth: when the wheat is emptied, you will see what is to be seen—as the sails are raised on your masts, the veil of your understanding will lift; when the wind fills them smooth and white like a groaning wife's belly, your joy will swell like them. Your risk is nothing, taking me aboard will cost you little. Yet think of the rewards. *Experientia longa malorum* has taught me that greatness is given only to the mettlesome. What are your hopes? It is said that you are evilly in debt. There remains no way for you to climb suddenly but by doing some rare stratagem, the like not before heard of: and at this time fit occasion is offered. I have told you the gold's worth. Is not this to be struck bravely for (though we shall risk dancing in a hempen circle)?

I do not trust my life to a fool or a coward, I spare to such a few words of disdain: you seem a hardy honest man. That you left me at your lady's bidding (for *en amour hastive point son cueur ne trouve contentement*, her voice chimed so winningly I hear her yet) is no matter, because the god called Love will not be worshipped by leaden brains. For myself, exactly how well or ill I have done, I am ignorant (the eye sees round itself, sees not into itself): but I am not altogether Fame's outcast; truly she has feasted me with the vigorous nutriment of commendation by those whose Virtue is strong in the world. You have seen I was wounded, and recovered in a week. I have been thrown into rivers and risen drier than my pursuers. I have handled snakes and drunk deadly poison and come to no harm. In this, fortune has not made me reckless. I do not esteem the pox a pimple, I do not provoke swords when I want toothpicks. As for my honesty, you know I do not set my cap over my

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eyebrows like a politician, and nod and keep my secrets to myself; nor as the eagle casts dust in the eyes of crows, delude you lest you delve into my subtleties. Openly have I presented my words and myself, to be seen and allowed.

Now my fame and fortune rest with you. They are become leaves on the tree of your honor; you will choose to shake them off scornfully as wormeaten and worthless, or preserve and nourish them, for the harvest you shall find.

AMORTONELLI

2 Aug. A.D. 1537 (=May 11)

And so the captain took Amortonelli with him. I suppose that the silk in the chest signified gold because a famous treasure was known to have been concealed in it.

The next day I had a disturbing encounter with Dexter Hodge—do you remember, I saw him in Panoramus? I had driven out to the Firestone depot through the vacant town (Miami is puzzlingly unpeopled in this season, and unkempt too, with blackened fronds of low centaury still littering the gutters) to replace my front tires, and there was Hodge. He was ordering an extraordinary quantity of rubber-covered maritime gear—oars, keels, cables.

"I have decided to go into the treasure-hunting racket," he announced to me grandly. "Our first hunting grounds are to be the waters around Stork Island. Have you heard of its friendly dolphins? They play with visiting boats. We're afraid that unless we rubberize our protrusions, the dolphins will injure themselves, bleed, and attract sharks."

During this explanation the clerk, a short spaniel-faced man, stared at Hodge as though he were raving. Hodge took no notice and went on, to my consternation, to ask me to join his group and "turn out on a big game." After this he resumed his business without another word to me.

How should I have responded, or now respond, to this proposal? It is perhaps unimportant.

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It's surprising that you also should have found an Abbot of Montpelas. One would enjoy a connection, but the gap between them is so vast. Are you sure your date wasn't 1491?

At present my thoughts turn elsewhere. I gaze into my gin-and-tonic, where a last shrinking ice cube drifts among de-accelerating bubbles. Fancy has decided that this translucent, no-longer-cubic cube is a herald from the East. As it melts, it will release your essence to be drunk up. Afterwards, I'll reread your letter. Its words touched me beyond imagining. To find such pleasure sustained by such innocence is a satisfaction transcending the present conditions of human life.

XII

May 21

Twang can not know when death will-come, or wher or how, but as brath heave in and from my lung, so the smell of Zachary through my brane.

The Mister Hodge—why not? Go near him, yet tell no thing, and with to-listen hear may be gold-like fax for real gold; and all ways of look into earth and see.

The *abott of Montpelas* get the abby in 13 (thirteen) 91. This is a sure, I find the of-pope grant in Vatican Library. Too it 's-publish by Walcower in Anals of Banking, 1970, No. 3. And now, how doe I? Lorn more a bout Misser *Todao* and his stoff or go to Florenze (Italy)?

My freind of here at-last make in-visitation to her home for dindins. This is one very large *bouffé* meel. I home in: 3 men, all little with hot red cravatts, say Hello to Twang very loud, to-gether, and naer me, I think they drank, but no—they sit in the horners all the time after ward with to-say no thing and to-look diffrent. I say to my frend a litle, yet I listne much. The tlak of many man is ful of division for them, for me new systyms. I think, I will-rememmer a part, I wrote it write after:

1: "When I say, *slab*, I maen, *slab*."

2: "But whut do you dou with the *signifiant?* A road sign say, Miami 82 mile. What re-ality do this indicate? Miami?

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The distans be-tween the sing and the sity? The location of the sign? The semi-ottic (?) re-ality, the mmediate realita, posit a structsure..."

3: "I like Miami—of coarse it *is* infect-ed with Amerihans."

4: "Why strutcher it though? The elemens of the consep 'sign' thath you naem, and othrs giust as importort, are grasp by our outerd consciouscnesce in a kine of frifloatin jazz continume, so when I see the in for-mation containt, the so call content, I all so *feel* the grainy-ness of the would or flaky-ness of the pent, which ar part of the so-call form, in factt I can feel too the in-formation at any rat it 's only one hork of many bob-ing in the opent see of simultanity..."

1: "You're re-moving fenomema from the realn of linguage and so of thoughth. Langua must rehognies diacrony as-wel-as sincrony. When a man go-in to a forest to cuddown a tree, trim it, and gaze at this felt, mutilatet tree, the conseppt 'tree' do non dis-appear until he have huttitup in to severel peaces. How ever, as soon as he look at it once it be peeces, the conceptt 'tree' dis-appere and is re-place by the honsept 'bored' and later 'sign'. Nore do he think, 'I've-paint a tree' or, 'A forest point to ward Miami..."

I love this takl, be cause it is a bout Miami, and so, full of youre skinn. The sense of to-rub was not a ware, onely to me, yet so near, so near, my *tharaï lemu*—my for ever love.

The man that cut tree, so small, more-short than Mons. Latten, tak to me: "How go your re-cerches in the vatican?" I say, no thing.

XIII

May 26

Synchrony is one man's crony, and diachrony is another man's crony...

It will not be easy to "go near" Hodge. His name is an essential local power.

He is active in the expansive manner of old tycoons. He spends here the money he makes elsewhere, mainly I think

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in Victory Oil, contributing it to civic projects, advancing the cause of urban planning, and providing directly or indirectly many jobs in the Greater Miami area. He attends concerts and lectures, is a director of our Revival of Reading chapter, and from time to time publishes a sonnet in *Sewanee Review*. He may frequently be seen taking walks around the town, without gun or bodyguard. Every afternoon he visits his friend Silex Jewcett, who has spent half his long life in prison but is revered by the people of Florida as a saint. Hodge arrives at the municipal jail with a chamber band of thirteen sarrusophones playing spirituals, chats a while with Jewcett in the visitors' room, and leaves to the invariable strains of "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." Earlier in the day he can often be found at the Emerald Diamond coaching rookies of all ages, for he is a great sportsman. He has sponsored several swift milers, his *sepak raga* team—this should surprise you—boasts the fastest elbows in the West, and he is the source, guide, and goalie of the soccer team.

All this has brought Hodge prominence. Pictures of his squidlike face frequently appear in the *Sun-Times*, once even in *Time*. His less praiseworthy ventures are overlooked; apparently more for fun than profit, he has collaborated in some dubious undertakings. He directs one establishment called the Egyptian Temple, a "psychic gymnasium" whose activities are secret. Its members undergo an initiation that includes some form of baptism. They are an uneasy lot: track addicts, ward heelers, and other worrisome types; few seem to benefit from the "mysteries." None of them, however, complains.

A more reputable building for which Hodge is responsible is the New Wars Shrine. The monument is built entirely out of weapons. The columns are rocket casings. The altar is made from the illuminated instrument panels of heavy bombers. The wall of the apse consists of two thousand steel helmets stacked on their sides, their rims facing outwards: the exterior has been transformed into a giant memorial hive. Hodge pays the salary of the former Marine sergeant who serves as beadsman, a title that circumstances have altered to "beesman."

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Hodge's own house, although small, is a jewel of classic modern. It is built in the shape of a sundial and faced on all sides with malachite. Its one stark ornament is a high relief over the front door representing two wolves seated face to face, and between them a slender candle burning with a perpetual gas flame. The flower arrangements around the house are very sure.

Do you understand why I'm nervous about soliciting Hodge? The invitation to join his group of treasure-hunters was casual and never renewed. Any reminder might well be thought impertinent. I hesitate to tell him of my own plans (*our* plans), or to lure his interest with prospects of another treasure. He's too sharp for that. He is also not a person to whom one makes a gift to receive a gift in return; at least, not openly. Yet I'm impelled to follow your advice, and not just to learn more about treasure-hunting. I would, frankly, love to move in that world. In fact if I take up his offer my sincere "yes" will submerge my scheming "yes." But what can I say when I accost him—"I'm on Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver"?

I forgot to say that Hodge is popularly known as the Invisible Jesuit. Perhaps this refers to the Temple.

My own life is pale. It is always the same here. This neighborhood is so utterly without significance. I suppose to would-be boxers in Mauritius or Nome, Fifth Street has some significance, but I do not count it among the significant neighborhoods. There was another party at Dan's last night. It was so boring that after ten minutes I said I was tired, lay down in the bedroom to feign sleep, and was indeed soon asleep. When I awoke the place was deserted. I walked home through streets wet with May dew, glistening in the smaragdine dawn. I skirted an ocean of spilt milk where a tanker truck had exploded. Afterwards I made a snack, wishing hard you were making it for me. I would like to be assured that you will always be with me, and that I shall soon "come home." Enough complaining—things aren't so bad. After all, I've passed the worst of the vernal insomnia season, the rose fever season is almost over, and if Decoration Day weren't

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just around the corner it would be clear sailing.

I think you should go to Florence. Meanwhile I'll write the university in Montpelier to find out more about the Abbots.

XIV

May 30

Hwile your answer was come I have a to-meet with a man strogn in know-lege, and help, the name of him is de Roover, whowho say he 'll give the ex-perience of the hard appuratus of the Archivio segreto del Vatihano. Mr de Roover and tell of clippin-for honditions in the middle age: it is a tomb crime. How han clippins be maked in to money? Delicate, and more-so, be cause he 's cert this graet a amount can be one-ly one: of *Otto di Guardia*.

There 's the nwes of the tresor a lttle after that it is come to the popope. Then, the clippins are give to *Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici*—he late-er put a start to the grate bank. This, was to do pay-meant of a dept that Pop *Bonofazio* have have with *Vieri di Cambio*, who come be fore *Giovanni*, and a round 1393 *Giovanni* over-take his lie-abilities & acids. (Ho—my firs english joke!) So *Giov. di B.* a gree to do sell of clippins, he 'll-have his money and 'll-put the balance to the popal a hount.

The *Otto*, a stickcy misre, is come to Florence with *Farinata degli Umberti* and his Glibelhines. In a so safetyfull posizion, he hlips florins while the Ghibelines are in top (until to 1266) and make bucats of gold. Be cause of him (hate), Florence give the order of *fiorini di suggello* that have the sense "in seal bags".

And then, I con-tunue with my to-look for a treasure of clippins, chiefly in a shelves of name Introitus et exitus camerae apostolicae.

Hwat is to-persieve and to-think? That i've reflects perceptions in this material-suttle world, oh such are no thing when I go-in even to the firts absorbtion. *Naï sheen-am*—"so I in-dure (?)"—the daze, for the nihgt can not be in dure but is to die in teers and sleep. I make my las ricerch to day, to morrow I'll say, *Duvaï Roma*.

And: godl florens are in busunuss on-ly after twelfifty, per-hap

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many-man have small ex-perienze of them, and so it is safe-er for *Otto*. What give me pleasor in you, I han not know hwy, it is my memorease. So this gold sting like death fishes. Crime, potilics, make the stingma, and it go to no money, tradaded a cross years until *Giovanni*.

XV

June 4

Otto di Guardia's hoard makes an enthralling tale, but... Best of all who ever were loved in dreams, allow me one "but." Bypaths are an extravagance we cannot afford, and surely Otto is one. If the Medici have anything to do with our treasure, it was long after Giovanni di Bicci.

I had no sooner written you about Dexter Hodge than my relations with him abruptly changed. One morning he appeared at my door to ask "if he might drive me to work"! I have seen him twice since then. The last time furnished emphatic proof of his new opinion of me: I was given a private tour of the Egyptian Temple.

Hodge's interest seems unnatural and I am upset by it.

One enters the Temple grounds at 14 St. Luke's Lane, a posh little street in the new residential section. The gate opened at the approach of Mr. Hodge's limousine. We nosed through it and turned into an alley of yews leading to a graveled parking area. There we continued on foot.

About twenty acres of land surround the Temple: park, garden, and pasture. A group of barn-like buildings stands at one end of the grounds, and towards it we directed our steps. "Here," said Mr. Hodge, "is my sacred zoo." We passed enclosed fields where zebras, buffaloes, and gazelles grazed, a mud pool whose surface was swollen with an ellipse of hippopotamus, a stretch of sand occupied by a camel and swarms of blond hares, an eighty-foot-high aviary of glistening wire. The buildings housed reptiles, fish, and insects.

After we had visited the menagerie, Mr. Hodge, gazing about his domain, explained: "In the practices of our Temple we implement man's ancient belief in the *ka*, or double.

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Every animal you have seen belongs to a member of our congregation, not only as his property, but as a visible and objective symbol of his inner life. Through their appearance, the state of their health, the nature of their diet, and a host of lesser omens, these creatures manifest the hidden truth of the man. When assailed by spiritual doubt, by anxiety over the influences of the world, or by curiosity as to what the future holds in store, a member has only to visit his animal doubles to find illumination."

Mr. Hodge chuckled. "That's the pitch. It's a fascinating business, but then the meeting of two cultures is always exciting.

Having admired the zoo, charming in its Ludwig der Zweite way, I expressed my amazement that it could be run at a profit. How could the Temple clientele, known to be less than prosperous, buy and keep the animals?

"Once they believe, they find the money; and once they're initiated, they believe."

We had reached the Temple proper. As we mounted its steps, bells pealed quietly about us. Draped in a weighty rust-colored robe that matched his beard, a Catonian figure stood in the portal.

"Wherefore, child, wishest thou to ascend..." he began, his voice cracking sleepily.

"Can it, Johnny," Mr. Hodge interrupted. "I'm just taking a friend through."

Bowing us in, the attendant murmured, "Thank *you*, Mr. Hodge."

As we entered the building Hodge said, "The main rule of the initiation is not to play the hinge. If a novice looks back, he has to start over. There's no significance in this, but after a while he wonders what's creeping up on him from behind.

"When he has crossed the threshold he strips and gives his clothes to Ramsama," Mr. Hodge went on, indicating the bearded man. "He is led through this door into the first chamber. In the vast room, as if to emphasize the pettiness of the individual in the Great Mystery, the novice is confined in

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this pyrex cell. Lights in its ceiling illuminate the silvered walls and floor, which mirror the novice grotesquely. He is left alone, standing by that little pyramid of green marbles. Sooner or later he touches them, starting a mechanism that releases and ignites a flow of propane gas around the base of the walls. The lights go out. Blue fire fills the cell with a whoosh. The flames singe a few body hairs, and the mirrors refract great heat. The novice is in quite a lather when we let him out.

"He descends the stairs to this corridor, which is even dimmer than now. Attendants seize him and wrap him in three sheets of translucent black polythene, zipping them together. Hermetically enclosed, he is left to work himself free. This should be easy, since the zippers can be opened from within; but the novice is hot and anxious, batteries of strobe lights flash darkly over him, and before long he starts to suffocate. His gasping face at last appears. The lights steady to an agreeable shade of green; cool air is wafted over him; ladies disengage him from his shroud, and rub him with soothing oil. His hopes rise.

"The male attendants reappear, however, to hurl him down another flight of steps (safely padded with foam rubber.) He lands in a blacker cellar, a real dungeon. He is taken and thrust upside down through an elastic aperture lined with hog bristles into a tiny compartment in which he fits barely and cannot move at all. Wait a sec, I'll turn on the lights. The hole is made of obsidian, hard, smooth, and opaque. A woman's voice announces that the novice is to remain there twelve hours, with the passage of each hour to be signaled by a gong. In fact the 'hour' is rung every ten minutes—in his terror the novice loses all sense of time, and two hours is enough for the required effect. There is no light, little air, except for the gong the silence is complete, the oil with which he was rubbed is spiked with Tabasco, and every so often a bone-and-leather claw presses against his chest. I tell you, when he comes out of there he's a new man.

"I forgot to mention that until this last confinement, a deafening recording of the *Turangalila Symphony* has accom-

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panied the initiate through his trials. The music now resumes more softly. Following the faint signs of daylight, the novice emerges onto the terrace. Here the ladies wash him, wrap him in a linen tunic, and seat him at this table, where a basket of grapes and cherries has been placed. By now he is so discouraged that no matter how hungry he is, he will not touch the fruit for a long time. Finally he must. He eats a bit: there are no surprises. I make my entrance. Attendants remove the fruit and replace it with a pile of marbles, like the one in the pyrex cell. I then pluck away the feather awning that shades the terrace, marking the end of the ceremony and the novice's admission."

Mr. Hodge is known to perform this gesture with *panache*, and it is often cited as an example of his old-world charm.

"I now begin indoctrinating the novice, who is weak with exhaustion and relief. A capacious chair is brought out for me, into which I settle luxuriously; and, while I give my lecture, I quaff champagne and dip an occasional crisp into a bowl of caviar.

"I start by declaring that there is only one road to happiness in our universe: abnegation and love of one's brother. The first step must be the lessening of one's attachment to base things. One must learn to be poor; and while true poverty is of course a spiritual essence, it can be approached through material acts. Therefore the novice's money will not be returned with his clothing. Anticipating complaints, I warn that love is a stern master.

"I then describe the *kas*. I explain how useful animal doubles can be in ordering one's spiritual life: how, for instance, it is easier to love one's brother through his double (with the corollary 'He who hates his brother's double is a murderer'); how one learns from the *kas* to open the bowels of compassion; how, with one's private world made visible, self-understanding becomes easy, and through it universal knowledge."

Here I broke in with a question that I had meant to ask earlier. Were the initiations into Miami's exclusive Knights of the Spindle conducted on similar lines? "But," Mr. Hodge

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answered incredulously, "those people are the pure quill!" He resumed his account:

"Usually the novice accepts my theory. I put this acceptance to a harsh test. I confront him with the obligation of founding a psychic menagerie.

"A complete system of *kas* comprises fourteen traditional categories, which should ideally be represented by different animals. These categories are strength, power, honor, prosperity, food, long life, influence, brilliance, glory, knowledge, magic, creative will power, sight, and hearing. A correct psychic menagerie might consist of an elephant, a lion, a horse, a bee, an ant, a turtle, a pilot fish, a peacock, an eagle, a seal, a viper, a monkey, an owl, and a bat. To perfect it, you would then pair your *kas* with anti-*kas*, so as to polarize your spiritual qualities in the most revealing way possible. Each *ka* would then cohabit with a creature that was its categorical opposite. You could match the elephant with a caterpillar, the lion with a chicken, the horse with a parrot, the bee with a coyote, the ant with a grasshopper, the turtle with a butterfly, the pilot fish with a giraffe, the peacock with a buzzard, the eagle with a rat, the seal with a sheep, the viper with a camel, the monkey with an earwig, the owl with a mole, and the bat with an eel. Of course some combinations are impossible: how could one prevent the elephant from walking on the caterpillar, or the lion from eating the chicken, or the earwig from entering the monkey's ear? In any event the collection is too grand for our customers, who settle for much less ambitious, that is less expensive solutions.

"We permit them to buy one animal to fill several categories. The elephant is probably the best example of spiritual versatility since he can, with the possible exception of brilliance, cover the field. The two elephants you saw are here for that very purpose. Even with local animals one can manage: a bear, a sponge, a lynx, an alligator, a puma, a manatee, and a duck satisfy all the requirements aside from honor and creative will power, two virtues in small demand.

"So after the novice has admitted the desirability of a menagerie, and after I have shaken him with an appraisal of

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various kinds of whale, I turn to cheaper beasts, which I pick with a good idea of how much money my client can be persuaded to spend. He jumps at the chance. He promises to buy, say, a horse, a mina bird, and a small shark. You must remember that he is hungry, thirsty, tired, confused, naked, and trapped. He'll pledge me his bottom dollar to get home, and I have a book of open checks ready to forestall backsliding.

"After their initiation, most members return to the Temple only to consult their *kas*. We attempted communal activities, but the clients are such a suspicious lot that it was hard getting them under one roof. Now we just field a baseball team.

"A new member often stays away at first, suspecting that he's been swindled. But when he learns that his *kas* have arrived, sooner or later he wants to see them. They usually delight him; not because of any affection for animals, but because the *kas* represent money, and he transfers his love of money to them.

"The work of fostering the member's belief in the *ka* devolves on the zoo keepers. For the time being I fade out, bearing the load of initial resentment, and not reappearing until it has been forgotten. The keepers expertly secure the member by furnishing likely material for the demonstration of *ka* theory. They submit elaborate reports of each menagerie's diet, excretions, pulse rate, and temperature, which are supplemented with affectionate accounts of its daily behavior. The keeper's experience and the member's credulity, without which the Temple would never have attracted him in the first place, gradually bind him to his animals. And as soon as a single correspondance occurs between an animal's life and his own, and chance brings this about as often as calculation, his enthusiasm alone is enough to perpetuate the phenomenon. He is so delighted by access to supernatural power that he will make his life conform to his *kas* to preserve it. If, for instance, he finds his prosperity-*ka* ailing before a poker game, he will either be too worried to play well or unconsciously lose money to prove the *ka* right. And when a *ka's* condition is favorable, members will surpass themselves to achieve success. At the last elections one party hack delivered the

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toughest ward in the city after his gorilla ate an extra five pounds of bananas."

"Maybe your theory works," I suggested.

Mr. Hodge looked into the distance.

"Professor Stedman Cinques of Columbia University has proved... No, no," he laughed, "don't make me go through that. It *is* true that the human may sometimes function as the animal's *ka*—but that's a delicate subject."

He paused to light a cigar. "We've had one unforeseen problem. Some members, after growing very fond of their animals, turn equally suspicious of them. I couldn't understand why until I realized that having radically identified themselves with their *kas*, they come to mistrust the animals as they mistrusted themselves. We've had to provide various types of inanimate scrying for them—haruspication, visions in pools of mercury, palpating the umbones of Venus shells. One remedy is to slaughter the *kas* and investigate their entrails, in the Roman manner. Another menagerie can then be started."

I asked if *kas* were consulted about sexual problems.

"Of course. That sort of divination is called shadowing."

"Do you see the members often?"

"Every day. I have to. You see, since 'the universalism of the Temple allows of no restriction,' our assembly is a bunch of mediocrities, misfits, and cowards. They never stop complaining, about themselves, about the world, and worst of all about the mystical universe. Why do you think I know the Vedas and the Book of the Dead almost by heart? It's the long hours I spend meditating with my miserable customers."

We were once again at the parking area. Mr. Hodge instructed his chauffeur to take me home. He concluded our visit with a pre-Socratic remark: "The games grow old, but the marks are always new."

Since then I have returned to my monotonous schedule. I've had enough of this sad world that spins forever in its greater and lesser dreams.

Do you think it prudent to involve the de Roover person in your research?

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XVI

Giune 8

When 1/2 the erth sciscors us, my all-earth is *slop* (misiry), such misyry *me wun lucr-em vin*, I 'm similir I am eating a horpse. This is deep Pan re-act to wo—more-creul than to-be death and ate.

A gainst memory I out-leave the signifiant detell. The tresure took by Pop *Bonifaze* has the name de tribus serranis, whiwhich have the italian to-mean dei tre sciarrani, "of 3 see perches". In the lettr to the of-ship captain, that has-be in your lettre to me, *Amortonelli* ear the man with full-er voice say, "on lid of chesst were-carve crewdly 3 fishs." I'm so mist up by different moneys in the '400, are you can say how this have worth of that?

My mind is in-certn why Mr Hodge 'll-have no interest in you, be cause you "upsets". Is he not can harmony-inpulse to you, as you're sweet? Ana-way I clime the train to Florenza to night. I have the idea, it is your 2 scales of years? But I do n't see this like tru.

Now we have 3 chains from of-Mr-*Todao* clippings and the hord of *Amortonelli*. One, the fammily of *i Medici*, two, the *abbott of Montpelas*, and three fish. I tell to you, I miss you dear-ly. I love you yet more. The to-be in bed with Inglish Grammr of Jespesen is not very fun-y, mon ami.

XVII

June 13

How vividly I see you! So near I can imagine touching you. But I want to touch more than your wraith. Twang, can this scheming after gold justify the decay of contentment that separation imposes? If only I could detach my hope of riches from the thought of your eyes! It's as though looking into them had ignited a passion for difficult glories. But without you I sag; without you, I could believe that the soul and the body are not one.

It must be getting hot in Italy. Do you have summer clothes, and enough? Nothing, I suppose, could be cooler than a loosely ordered *phrap*.

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Dexter Hodge continues attentive. Yesterday he mentioned events of the summer season (*the* season in Miami now) to which he will take me. This was a relief. During the previous week he had talked of nothing except his desire to have me play in some baseball games he is sponsoring.

I think my worries about him were fantasy. There is certainly no age problem between us.

You've seen baseball. Can you imagine me playing? Mr. Hodge left me no choice. One afternoon, after a few gulps of rum, I drove over to the diamond for the first time, expecting sure humiliation.

Mr. Hodge welcomed me and introduced me to his team, the Sovereigns, who represent the Egyptian Temple.

The Sovereigns wore uniforms of bright orange mohair into which cabbalistic emblems in green and purple had been knitted. They belied Mr. Hodge's description of Temple members, and seemed to be true gentlemen-sportsmen. Some had nicknames behind which I discerned Miami celebrities, a fact that I kept to myself, addressing them by their chosen monickers: the Calcium Nut, the Locus Solus Kid, Christ Tracy, Mushnick the Second, Cortisone Moonface, Omnibus Hesed (the pitcher).

Mr. Hodge wanted me to catch. It was obvious that I could play no other position. I insisted that my arm was weak, and so became an umpire. I can't throw, or catch, or run, or hit—I can only love! Mr. Hodge felt it was sad to be an umpire so young. He decided to play catcher himself: "I'll manage the team just as well from a squat."

The Sovereign's opponents were the Class Cannons. After two games their team is still wholly mysterious to me. Its members have remained nameless and almost wordless. They do not speak unless circumstances force them to. None has ever admitted his identity to me, or replied to my advances other than with flashing gestures of the hands.

At three o'clock Mr. Hodge told me to start the game. I asked the manager of the Cannons if he was ready. He responded by taking from a square box next to the bat rack a golden hunting horn, which he raised to his lips. The Can-

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nons assembled behind him. The manager blew three short pure notes, then tucked the horn under his arm.

The Sovereigns had meanwhile lined up in front of their dugout. As soon as the horn call ended, they began to sing. The music was homely, the performance smooth:

The Lord knocks over the proud man, but never hurts the humble.
Throw yourself down, He'll lift you up, no matter how low you tumble.
Curse the Devil and he'll depart, spurn him who'd work your ruin,
But bless the Lord, draw near to Him, and He will take you to Him.

The Lord knocks over the proud man, but never hurts the humble.
Throw yourself down, He'll lift you up, no matter how low you tumble.
Curse the Devil and he'll depart, spurn him who'd work your ruin,
But bless the Lord, draw near to Him, and He will take you to Him.

The Lord knocks over, &c.

As they repeated the stanza, irritation, mute and irrestible, gripped the Cannons. At last their shortstop climaxed a pantomime of swelling fury by forcing out, in a hiss of thrilling sibilance, the word "Cease!" The teams broke ranks, the Cannons scattering over the field, the Sovereigns returning to their dugout. I waited behind the plate (its pentagonal whiteness unspotted by any cleat) while the Cannon battery warmed up. I noticed that the right fielder, a slender youth with shoulder-length golden hair, was straightening his flowing locks with long strokes of his comb.

The pitcher nodded his readiness. I waved my arm and called out, inexplicably forgetting what game was being

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played, "Serve!" I at once altered the command to the correct "Play ball!" as a soundless snigger enlivened the infield. This was my only mistake.

The Cannons dominated the game. In defense their speed and deftness controlled the ball completely. In fact on the rare occasions when a decision went against them, they managed somehow to make the ball disappear, thus stopping the game and creating a most unnerving confusion. Usually, to get the game started again, the adverse decision had to be reversed, compromised, or cancelled; sometimes Mr. Hodge would successfully plead with the Cannons to restore the missing ball. His tactic was to express intense compassion for the fielders, while arguing that it was in the general interest to resume the game. The ball would then reappear as mysteriously as it had vanished, perhaps bouncing nonchalantly in the pitcher's glove.

Once even Mr. Hodge's patience was surpassed. In the seventh inning the Cannons had narrowly missed a double play—both runners were safe on first and second. The baseball disappeared. Mr. Hodge walked out to the shortstop and began his plea. The shortstop pointed down the road, to a spot where Mr. Hodge had parked his aged jeep. It was now gone.

Mr. Hodge lost his temper. "By God, I'll take you to court for this. I know I can't expect you bastards to know right from wrong, but at least you can tell the difference between a baseball and a jeep!"

The shortstop silently held up the ball in his ungloved hand. Mr. Hodge took the ball, cocked his right leg and, like a Thai boxer, swatted the shortstop across the ear with his foot, knocking him to the ground. The Cannon got up with a mimic snarl; but neither he nor his teammates complained. Mr. Hodge turned away, tossed the ball to the pitcher, and was walking off the field when from behind the Sovereign dugout the Cannon bat boy rolled the jeep into view.

I observed all this distractedly. The batter waiting his turn had been whistling "Lover, come back to me," and I had been shaken by the song's nonexistent pathos.—There was a time

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when my attachment to you naturally found its words. Now separation has worn a chasm within me, words are engulfed by it. If you do not know how desperately I love you I shall never be able to tell you.

Forgive me for thrusting these after all useless emotions on you. That stupid song!

So play started again. Having two men on base did the Sovereigns no good. Neither then nor in any other inning were they able to score. On the other hand, the Cannons wasted none of their seven hits.

In the second inning, after a walk and a single had put two men on base, the Cannon manager with a certain ostentation planted a six-foot high cane in the ground in front of his dugout. The right fielder, the long-haired blond, was at bat. The Sovereign infield razzed him loudly—"Hey, sweetie, the Youth and Beauty Pageant's tomorrow"—but he took no notice and doubled in both runners. Two innings later, with a man at first, the Cannon manager stood a stiff-backed wooden chair next to the cane. The batter hit a home run. Finally in the sixth inning, with Cannon runners on second and third, the hunting horn used at the start of the game was set bell downward between cane and chair. One batter fouled out, but the next hit a long single. Watching the sixth run score, the Sovereign catcher (Mr. Hodge) cussed, "Damned Hebraic parallelism!"

I performed my role satisfactorily. The Sovereigns were friendly, in spite of their weak play. The Cannons were unrelentingly distant. Only once did any of them react to my presence. As the fourth inning commenced, their catcher approached bearing a Ry-vita smeared with cottage cheese. He handed it to me without a word as he settled behind the plate.

I hope you like cottage cheese as much as I do. There is, however, nothing like it among Pan dairy products.

When I arrived home late in the afternoon I found that my pockets had been emptied of their contents—bills, small change, bloat pills, everything! I had left my keys in the car, so at least I could get into my own apartment.

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Next day the Sovereigns won, 1–0. They scored their run in the eleventh inning on a walk, a stolen base, and two sacrifice bunts. They are not a great hitting team. The Cannons were shut out by a new pitcher, a wiry chap named Peter Jeigh. Mr. Hodge introduced him to me with the comment, "As a Sovereign he may be a mite snider, but watch him pitch." He *was* good, although he had only one arm. He had lost the other "blowing the chase," whatever that means.

Peter Jeigh was almost as silent as the Cannons. I heard him speak only once. Shortly before the game, I found him gazing into the palm of his glove, which he was massaging with neat's-foot oil. He murmured, more to himself than to me, "I shall attain sympathy with inanimate things."

Between innings I told Mr. Hodge about my missing possessions. He immediately went to speak to the Cannon manager. Returning, he promised that the matter would be cleared up. Nothing was apparently done, but when the game was over my missing belongings were back in my pockets!

I wrote to the University of Montpelier for help with the Abbots of Montpelas. I referred in passing to a consignment of silk that may have figured in certain transactions...

As you say, the three perches do plausibly link the clippings with our treasure. Your flair is incredible.

You ask about the currencies of the time. The question is not as difficult as it might appear. The first thing to get straight is the Florentine florin, or rather florins. The gold florin that was called "sealed florin" for the reasons you mention was soon debased, so that in the fifteenth century a new coin had to be created to replace it, the "large florin." It was worth a tenth and later a fifth more than the sealed florin. Actually "replace" isn't accurate since the two florins coexisted for a time until the older one was abolished, in 1471, but for simplicity's sake think of the matter as a replacement. In any case these are the two florins to remember—however, see below. Next you must consider a third Florentine money in use during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the pound, more precisely the "affiorino pound." Let me say at

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once that this was not real money, there was no pound coin it was just a money of account. It was divided into twenty affiorino shillings and the shilling subdivided into twelve affiorino pence. These smaller units were also imaginary—perhaps imaginary isn't the exact word—oh, I forgot to mention that the florin was also divided into shillings, into twenty shillings in fact, like the pound, and also into two hundred and forty pence. The reason I forgot is that these shillings and pence are also imaginary, but of course the florin was not imaginary—there was a real florin coin (I mean naturally two coins, as explained.) Well, matters became simpler after the introduction of the large pound, no, no—the large *florin*, because the habit arose of accounting for fractions of the florin in terms of the divisions of the affiorino pound, according to which the florin was equal to twenty-nine affiorino shillings and three hundred and forty-eight affiorino pence. So remember that both the large florin and the pound were made up of the same shillings, twenty in the latter and twenty-nine in the former, and that in both cases the shilling was in turn divided into twelve pence, so that there were two hundred and forty affiorino pence to the pound and three hundred and forty-eight affiorino pence to the florin (large). Still, you should not forget that earlier the florin was also divided into its own shillings and pence, twenty and two hundred and forty respectively. In other words, a pound can be reckoned as twenty twenty-ninths of a later florin.—You may ask, if all these small moneys were imaginary, how did people pay for a sack of potatoes (I realize that there were as yet no potatoes.) You see, parallel to these gold systems there was another system based on silver, and it was used for such transactions. The main unit here was, as a matter of fact, also a pound, the "lesser" pound, and like the other pound it was divided into twenty lesser shillings and two hundred and forty lesser pence, but you must not let the equivalence of the names suggest equivalences of value—the values were absolutely separate. The trouble is that there was no legal ratio between gold and silver, so it's hard to say *what* the relation between the two, or three,

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systems was. However, this is only a little cloud in a generally sunny sky. Let's return to the first pound. This affiorino pound linked Florence to the pound system that was common to much of Europe during the Middle Ages. I don't mean to imply that the pounds of the various countries (which weren't really countries, I know, I only call them that for convenience)—that the various pounds were interchangeable. Far from it. But at least they had the same idea behind them. In England there was the pound sterling still current today, in Flanders the pound groat, so called because it was based on the groat, a small silver coin. That these pounds were silver did not prevent them from belonging to the international system that included the gold Florentine florin. Incidentally, you must not confuse the Flemish pound groat with the Venetian pound groat, the latter being based on a gold coin, the ducat, rather than on a silver coin the groat. (The pound in Milan was based on a silver coin as well, the imperial, which was constantly depreciating, so that the Milanese pound was always becoming smaller than the other pounds. Still, it was a pound.) In Geneva the situation differed in that the pound was *not* the main accounting unit, but the crown or rather crowns plural, since there were two, one being sixty-four to the mark and the other sixty-six—the mark was gold—forget about it. This system went to Lyons with the Geneva fairs, so that the Lyons branch of the Medici bank reckoned in crowns (at sixty-four to the mark) whereas in Avignon they did their accounting in "pitetti" florins. This florin is the other kind I referred to while defining the properly Florentine ones. It was lighter than the sealed florin, or at any rate lighter than the sealed florin before it was debased: consequently it was divided into twenty-four and not twenty shillings and two hundred and eighty-eight as opposed to two hundred and forty pence. The word "consequently" in the preceding sentence somehow does not ring true. Finally, there was one last other florin, imaginary in the way I have used "imaginary" in connection with these currencies, which was found in Genoa in quotations of money rates and held equal to twenty-*five* Genoese shillings. But generally

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merchants in Genoa used the Genoese pound, just as they used the Barcelonese pound in Barcelona.

Does this clear matters up?

XVIII

Theu is "us". I say this werd a gain, and again, to me. *Ticbaï stheu, theu ticbaï stheu.* O, yes. I'm tire *wuc vin*, like a deadboby. Trip is done, with no-sleep. This time I write only, I 'm here. Any gown is enough evne ruff and old. You will-have no fear, for my close. The hope come to me, to see out and a round in summer time and winter time, with free glanse, from a mountn, hwile my eys re-volve in a Khmer slime of heal'th—I to be nature with loooks in to nature with some ease-like sym-pathey like the blue-eye gras of meadows have a look in to the face of the sky.

End of Part One

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Patrick Nolan

Riding in a Car

to David Crosby

I get anxious
for the speed we go
some time as fast
don't seem natural
even if the Volkswagen
conform itself too
the vision uniform in nature
as a matter of fact
is done with coming to a stop

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A While Ago

Going up the street
away from the bay
Past the corner park by the library
In a little red Volkswagen with her
Driving look out the window at where
The mail box used to be two old men
stand there
One of them bends
A black hat on his head
Wipes a poodle's ass with his hanky
While the other watched intently.

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The Park

The park has a path
cut across it diagonally
a small cement dais
with a bush growing out
the center of that
in the winter
a desolate croquet court
over to one side
bordered on the western side
by an oblong green shack
where old Portuguese
& Italian men gamble
in a pink cement house
at the opposite corner
decorated with drapes, a couch
some chairs and a table
to simulate a living room
old women
& old men of a more genteel nature
play bridge or something similar.

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Charlie Vermont

for Barbara

if ever again
with the waves
the dog's way east
at dawn

this is what I wrote
when I came to know several years ago what I wanted

and this is now

how utterly vast I wanted it
having been locked in small apartments and subways
all my life

living in that slum the lower east-side
I saw that with you there was nothing
unless it was whole

and so with the sun
and with the ocean

I wanted to fuck you for all time

crawl up out of the stinking tenements into the dawn
and fuck you with a great and holy music
as great as the chord you set off
within me
with what
I can't name and never was able to
you may not know
may have lost to everyone except me

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Robert Harris

Solange

speaking over the telephone while ironing a blouse with French cuffs

throws her voice electronically to a distant city where it enters my ear

almost a nigger fragment, a *mystique* for the spirit left helpless by the intelligence.

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The Definition of Things in Terms of Their Modes of Functioning

What we know of external nature is wholly in terms of how the various occasions in nature contribute to each other's natures.

The whole environment participates in the nature of each of its occasions.

Thus each occasion takes its initial from the character of its environment.

Also, the laws which condition each environment merely express the general character of the occasions composing that environment.

This is the doctrine of the definition of things in terms of their modes of functioning.

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The Lion of Heyst

Kathrine Talbot

They lay side by side on that deserted coast. The beach below them stretched out each side into infinity, they had been there an hour or so and no one had passed within those miles of sands. At first they had watched the shipping through his binoculars, but the wind had flattened them, pushing them down.

She thought how like tomb effigies they looked, and how easy it would be to bury a corpse here, deep in the sand, under the accumulating wind, forever. She remembered a red spade she had used a few miles from here, in those Ostend childhood summers. She imagined herself burying him gladly forever, but could not think how one would kill a person, her husband, here. He would, naturally, not simply die to please her. Still she imagined it, he seemed immobile now, the wind took the sound of his breath away, he might be dead. When she had thus interred him in her mind, she sighed. It would be an answer to all their problems.

But then it came to her that this was his plan. That he had brought her here to murder her, to end their endless fight. If she had failed to provide herself with a weapon, he was sure to have in his pocket knife or cyanide, a silk scarf, last night's discarded stocking. She knew his efficiency and sweated.

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Under the hot sun, stretched out too flat for the winter wind to touch her she was warm, felt cold with fear, paralyzed. When would he turn against her?

Then she realized that he was talking. Her breath went slowly out of her body.

She listened. He was repeating much of the monologue he had pursued through Holland and Belgium. It brought back to her the neat Dutch hotel rooms they had shared, the wide Dutch landscape they had crossed, side by side, Edward talking. But if they had gone away to "sort things out," they had arrived at no tidy solution on this their last day.

"No," she said, as much a protest against death as against the suggestions for the future he was repeating. She had said "no" exhaustively for a long time. Her hatred for him sprang up in her so that she had to sit up and look at him, reassuring herself that he was really there, that her daydream had not yet killed him. Yet when she saw him, she could hardly understand her aversion, for he had not changed much in the twelve years of their marriage, looked young and guileless, handsome too, the man she had loved and married. Yet now she loathed the thought of his proximity, the sound of his voice, his opinions, and his being so at ease with her and with himself. And his love for the children, his gentleness.

She took up the binoculars and scanned the beach. It stretched in undiminished beauty and loneliness for miles each side. The sea looked calm under the sweeping wind. But a fishing boat, not so far out, tossed about like a child's toy. She should not have had, she knew, so many children. Four was too many for a man who could never be faithful. But she had not been able, somehow, to stop. The thought of a new baby in her arms had led her on.

She lay down again. Edward was advancing his favorite plan. He would install her and the children in a house in the country, while he lived in town with his mistress and came down at weekends.

"No," she said again.

"It would be best for the children."

This argument had been advanced for each solution. "Not

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harming the children" seemed the only principle they were agreed on.

And it seemed a reasonable solution. Given the premise that there would be no divorce, that she would not deprive the children of their father nor give them up, it was something that might, in the interim, be thought sensible. She knew this, but the thought of the peaceful week, waiting for his arrival on Friday night, week-in, week-out, appalled her. She could put up with him, she knew, for a time. When they were together her hatred was tolerable, tinged with affection. Had she not sat eating good continental food opposite him for a week? With pleasure? But to be alone, disencumbered, to feel his approach, was to become paralyzed with a fear-hate impossible to bear.

She began to dig in the soft cold sand with her hand. The wind had dropped a little so that it was possible now to sit up in comfort. The wonderful gold border of sand stretched away, and she watched it for the approach of some person, a human being who might come and resolve their dilemma. But Edward just lay and talked, recapitulating. His reasonableness beat on her ears like the sound of the sea. He was willing, it seemed, to make any sacrifice. Except the only acceptable one: to vanish, to cease to be. He would not say: I will go to America, to Antarctica, to Africa, I will die. Against her better judgment she understood that he claimed a right to live.

But even if he were in Africa, she thought, she would not feel safe. The further away he was, the more terrible he seemed to her, she would imagine him coming for her roaring out of the jungle, the monster she suspected him to be.

"Has it occurred to you that the fault is totally with you," he was saying, but not raising his voice in accusation, just stating. "We could live peaceably apart..."

"No," she said. And then, looking along the beach, straining her eyes into the far, sandswept, spray-veiled distance, she saw that at last they were no longer alone. She reached for the binoculars, and Edward also sat up. "Lunch soon," he said in his lazy, contented way.

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They were very far away. Even through the strong glasses the moving specks were only just discernibly human and animal. People and dogs, she thought. They were miles away, moving slowly, presumably coming nearer, on the very rim of the sea. Every now and again a gust of wind would obscure them with sand or spray, the very space shimmered and flickered. The dogs seemed to be bounding about, dashing into the sea, but whether there were two or three, or indeed one or two people, was impossible to make out. She handed Edward the binoculars.

"People and dogs," he said with finality. "I wonder whether this immense beach could ever be crowded in summer. There are hardly enough people in the whole of Europe to fill it. It would make a good holiday, some time, for the children."

Her children. She shuddered at his rightful concern with them. And she did not want to see it, did not want to see this coast populated, desecrated by the mobs of holiday makers. Today it was perfect, virginal. Her childhood dreams, her passionate love for it, the image of herself with her spade, her sand castle, were left intact.

She took the binoculars again. Slowly the group was advancing. The distance of the figures made their advance seem minute, but it also seemed possible that they were moving slowly, ambling, while the bounding dogs ran ahead and returned, putting up the seagulls which congregated on one patch of sand, turning it white, then on another. At any moment she expected them to turn lazily, return towards Ostend.

But when she looked again (they had gone quite a way round that roundabout of solutions again, Edward was back at the house in the country, the flat in town) they had come decidedly nearer. She saw the dogs dashing into the sea, saw a man. One man only. Black dogs they were, or dark, they ran out of the water, and she could imagine that they shook themselves. But one was still in the sea. When she focused on it, screwing up her eyes behind the lenses in effort, she could see it in the waves, a yellow blur, large. Her eyes hurt with

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the effort.

"No," she said.

Even without the binoculars one could now make out the group. Edward shielded his eyes and looked at them and nodded. "People and dogs," he said again. "Would you like to walk before lunch?" But she did not even give him her customary answer.

When she took the binoculars again she was startled. She was startled and instantly afraid with the terror she had sometimes when Edward's key turned in the lock. Now something monstrous was in the sea, no yellow dog but a large animal, bounding in the waves, battling. She could see the man on the shore, the ordinary dogs, and the creature, about to emerge, too large, too golden.

"A lion," she said. She felt faint, and wished to say: protect me.

"Hm?" he said and took the glasses. "Yes." Even he seemed astonished. "Extraordinary."

She could see it with the naked eye. It was swimming strongly in their direction; the thought of the great beast emerging on the lion-colored sand took her breath away.

"He has it on a line, I think," Edward said. He sounded uncertain, and for the first time she was not afraid of him. She said "Yes," like a foreign language.

The line seemed hopeful. A lion-tamer with a tame lion, one might have thought, but when she looked through the binoculars again the line was immaterial, flimsy. For they had come much nearer, and the sun seemed to reflect from the great wet golden animal, it pranced in the waves, nearer and more terrible. She preferred the distance ordinary vision gave, and flung the glasses away from her, sitting tense, and watching, staring at the glittering sea. How could that African beast be transformed into this seal-like creature, sporting in the waves, swimming along the shore with the effort of its great limbs? And though fear gripped them—Edward had taken her hand—they were also in the grip of amazement and admiration.

And then the man halted and visibly pulled in the line. He

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braced himself, they could see, and the dogs came close to him, standing still at last, waiting too for the lion to emerge from the water. It was a hard pull, they could see, and they held their breath, pulling with him in their minds as one does when one sees such an effort made far away, and yet also wishing to push the great animal back into the sea. For one could not help feeling that it would bound out of the waves snarling, snapping its jaws, immensely enlarged even without the glasses.

He pulled, and at last the yellow creature, half submerged in the surf as it had been, came out and stood on the beach. More than ever the sun reflected on its yellow skin, for it was not fur, no lion's mane. On the beach stood a man, breathless, half dead with effort, clad from head to foot in yellow, shining oilskin. He was tied into a complicated harness and carried a stiff net on his chest, and this the other man took from him now and put on the sand. The dogs bent down and sniffed at it, the harness was loosened, and the human lion shook himself as if to relax his stiffened limbs. He panted, and so did his leader; the net was emptied into a sack. Now the dogs lost interest, raced ahead, she thought she could even hear them bark. Then, half a mile away, the man stood and smoked.

As her body relaxed she felt her hand held. She lay back and stared straight into the sun. Her fear was like a palpable bubble, a cage which enclosed them both, and she knew that for the first time ever they were equal, equal in fear and relief, equally reprieved. She could imagine herself unafraid of Edward as she had been before their first sexual encounter, saying "yes" to him with reservations, being calm in his absence since his return did not threaten her, accepting him as a person rather than an enemy. She could imagine him turning to her, remaining faithful as he had so often promised, no longer defeated by her aversion.

"I was afraid," she said, and this she had never said before.

"I was afraid too," he echoed, sitting up, laughing it off a little since it was, after all, slightly ridiculous. She wondered whether they had indeed been afraid of the jungle beast bursting out of the waves, or whether they had thought it more

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a legendary creature, unreal, spectral, from another world.

When she sat up again the old man (for she imagined him so) was helping the young one again into the harness; adjusted the net. She could imagine him whistling to the dogs, for they suddenly assembled. Then the lion man, holding the lead in one hand to keep it unsnared, fought his way back into the waves, turning away, fighting the water and the spray, while his companion let out the line and then slowly retraced his steps, walking parallel with the shore, leading the thrashing figure in the water, diminishing visibly to the naked eye.

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Family Matters

Jonathan Schwartz

His grandmother was asking for him as she lay dying, they had written, and even though his mother's side of the family were strangers, he drove out to see the old woman in Plainfield, New Jersey, on a Saturday afternoon in August that fell in the middle of an oppressive heat wave. He, Goodman, took a girl, Libby, having always decorated himself with womanly trinkets on occasions that required solemnity; he felt more comfortable in the company of a woman and realized that the importance he gave to her aesthetic acceptability reflected his own disquietude at any prospect of going it alone. The prettier the womanly trinket, he understood, the stronger he thought he appeared.

His mother had died seventeen years ago when Goodman was thirteen. Her own family had been remote from the world she entered at marriage; Goodman's father, a journalist, made every effort to include his wife's sisters and mother at parties and on holidays, but gradually they fell away like lesser players in a tournament until only her mother, Goodman's grandmother, remained with any degree of consistency. Grandma was an old woman early, shaking with Parkinson's disease and a natural tendency toward extreme fright, but she survived her daughter by seventeen years, living a perky life around gardens of radishes and maple trees, until now, with her other three daughters and many grandchildren wandering through the house, she lay quietly near death, a box of YES tissues and her wedding ring sitting nakedly on a long white bed table.

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"The last time I saw my grandmother was about two years ago," Goodman was saying in the car. "She made chocolate junket about a hundred feet deep, but she couldn't hold the spoon still and the stuff kept jumping off onto the table. My father had her over for the Christmas holidays. It's the first time in, I don't know, years, that he called her. She was delighted."

Libby rested her arm on the window sill, a cigarette in her fingers. She was a tan, small girl, with serious dark eyes, and long light-brown hair that now sat on the top of her head, puffed and confined. She liked this Aaron Goodman, whom she had met only a month before at a lawn party in Martha's Vineyard. He was arrogantly sure of himself, she thought, and without being handsome, he possessed a certain aloof good looks, troubled and distant, that she had imagined her husband would have. Goodman was a writer enjoying a period of moderate success, his interests were varied, his family respectfully Jewish, happily not orthodox, his father a distinguished man of letters, all in all a good set-up for a young girl with a flimsy and abandoned theatrical career behind her, and an apartment in the Village with a small weedy garden, and a sizable collection of chamber music recordings. Riding beside him today she felt mellow. Just in love a little.

"I don't really know my aunts at all," Goodman explained. "There are three of them. Grandma is in one of their houses. From what I understand from my father, they all live near each other in a compound like the Kennedys, only in Plainfield. They're close-knit as hell. I'll bet they resented my mother marrying above her class. But, you know, they've never made any demands on me whatsoever, from the point of view of family crap. I haven't seen one of them except grandma since I was ten."

"Are you more like your father or your mother?" Libby asked.

"My father. Surely my father. I don't remember my mother clearly, except for some vague impressions. She was ill when I was growing up, so that she was in bed a lot of the

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time. She collected copies of *Gourmet Magazine* even though she was on a salt free diet and couldn't eat anything but rice. It was a Southern doctor's notion that people with high blood pressure could be helped by eating only boiled rice. After a while she could hardly swallow it. I've always felt that I should hate rice by association and out of respect, but, funny, I love it. Occasionally when I'm eating it, I think of my mother choking it down. I still love it. I'm a son-of-a-bitch, aren't I?"

Libby smiled. "Maybe," she said.

"I'm sure that most of my blood is my father's," Goodman continued. "Everyone says how very much alike we are. Gestures and everything else. Occasionally I'm aware that certain movements of my hands are like his, certain stances, even certain expressions."

"Why were you an only child?" Libby asked, taking a drag on her cigarette.

"Because of my mother's illness, I suppose, although I don't really know. Apparently it was a helluva problem for her to have even one child. She was in bed for the nine months but she made it."

"She made it," Libby said, patting Goodman's knee.

"The thing that was most important to my father when she died, was to assure me that her disease, hypertension, wasn't hereditary. He kept assuring me that I was in perfect health and that my mother's illness had no bearing on my future. I wondered why he was making such a big *tsimis* about it when I had never even thought about it. I had never even made a connection between a mother's disease and a child's future. It was the first time I'd ever heard the word 'hereditary.' He pounded it in."

"I think he was assuring both of you," Libby said. "My father has a way of addressing himself *and* the family, all at the same time. When he's going over financial figures, he'll say, 'It's important to be a stickler on detail,' or something like that. On the tennis court he shouts at himself using his own name: 'Get a hold of yourself, Bernstein, keep that ball low.'" Libby laughed. "I always think of it as *Daddy* talking to him-

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self. But it's just a *man* talking to himself, not Daddy. That's what I've never really seen. It's a *man*. You know? Listen, Jesus, it took me years to believe the poor guy ever had a sex life. I mean, wow, I couldn't *imagine* a thing like that."

"His daughter has a sex life," said Goodman.

"He'll *never* imagine a thing like that."

They drove out Route 22 to Plainfield kicking around things past. Goodman liked the sharing with Libby. True, the nature of the trip provoked talk of family, but the talk came easily to him; her response made him comfortable. As they talked he imagined his mother listening to them, invisible in the back seat, approving of the girl. And of him? He had never thought of himself in his mother's eyes. She had died in the middle of his puberty, and except for guilt in the first few years over solitary experiments that he convinced himself she was aware of somewhere, he had never wondered what his mother would think of this or that, of this tie at Saks, of this girl friend in college, of this stealing a book from Brentano's, of this story of his, this turn of phrase, this play he enjoyed, this lover he chose, and, in fact, this country excursion to grandma. Until now. The deathbed of grandma was reflected in his mother's eyes. Had those eyes been brown like his own? He didn't know much about that sickly woman whom he recalled wrapped in a flowered bed coat, with a copy of *Gentleman's Agreement* on the night table, up at night weeping, "I can't do it, Phil, I don't have the strength, I don't have the strength!" And his father's voice, muffled by its own resonance, comforting, assuring. Goodman was amazed at his own shallowness, at his lack of curiosity about his own blood, and he told Libby that he was ashamed that so few traces remained of his mother; he had let them slip by.

"Not true," she said emphatically. "They're there."

"But what a waste," he said, shaking his head. "Even though we were so different, she was, after all, my mother. I lived thirteen years with her. Right down the hall, is a matter of honest to God fact." Goodman remembered his mother coming down the hall to say goodnight. He could always hear the creak of the bare floor, so that radios could be turned

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off in time, books stashed away, lights clicked shut, before the door would open slowly and his mother would say, almost in a whisper, "Sleepin'?" Goodman guessed that he was never sleepin' when his mother asked, that every single time he had been waiting for her, the quilt pulled up to his chin, for he was somehow embarrassed to have his mother observe him lying down and stretched out in pajamas; it made him feel nude and shy. Sometimes he would answer her. Sometimes he remained silent. She would ask again, "Aaron, sleepin'?" If he didn't reply she would come to him and kiss him on the back of the head, for he always faced the wall, his eyes wide open, listening. Then she would creep away, his door would shut, the hallway would squeak beneath her, and she would be gone to her room, a dark chamber even at noon. Goodman often thought of Miss Havisham and the dingy Dickensian castle with its sole, desolate occupant devoured by the gloom reading *Gentleman's Agreement*.

"What about your mother's family?" Libby asked. She faced him as he drove, her legs tucked beneath her, her back resting on the door.

"What about them?" Goodman answered, somewhat crossly.

"What kind of people are they?" Libby asked, reasonably.

"Suburban people," Goodman replied. "Plainfield, New Jersey people. They're not hip-smoker-reefer."

"Your mother has three sisters?"

"Yes. Irene, Eve, Helen. Grandma's in Irene's house. Irene's the oldest daughter. My mother was the youngest."

"I'm glad I came with you," Libby said.

"You're a real help with these family matters, you know," Goodman told her seriously.

"It's just that I like to travel. I'm a vagabond."

"Vagabon*dress*," Goodman said.

***

"Why you really do look wonderful," Aunt Irene was saying in the living room of a three-story home with dark-red

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flowery European rugs in the hallways, and paintings of landscapes and deer, reminding Goodman of badly lit civil servants' offices with tired mountains in gray frames. On the mantelpiece, below a green and brown drawing of a river and the beginnings of a dense wood, there sat a photograph of his mother and her three sisters, their arms around each other. Goodman was shocked at his own resemblance to all four of them, their wide foreheads and round faces beaming out from years past at his own wide forehead and round face in August in Plainfield, New Jersey.

"I couldn't really say that you've changed at all," Irene continued. You still have the same expression as you did when you were a child."

This was an old woman, thought Goodman. This Aunt Irene was aged, not the young frisky aunt he vaguely remembered. Could this be what his mother would be like now? This rapid-talking, high-pitched woman saying something about the heat, asking about his father's health, and lowering her voice, speaking gravely of grandma, who, Goodman supposed, lay sleeping in a room with dainty drawings of English teacups on the wallpaper.

Aunt Eve and Aunt Helen were suddenly there, and younger women and younger men, and children, one kid named Charley with a transistor radio to his ear (Goodman caught tinny baseball sounds, the Mets in what he imagined as a listless afternoon game with the Cubs. The whole concept of the Mets was only a few years younger than the ear into which it whispered). These Protestant faces examined his own, the celebrity face, the Jewish face of the family. Libby sat by him on the couch, smiling and shaking hands. In the bathroom she had pulled her hair down, and now it touched her shoulders. Goodman observed that Libby looked fine for the occasion; her attractiveness flattered him among these plain, gazing people with curly hair and fat white arms.

And then they all went up the stairs, Irene leading the way, to the third floor and down a long dim corridor to the last door, and into a small room where the old woman lay with her eyes closed. She was buried away, Goodman felt, in the

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furthest corner; he thought of Kafka's insect, entombed and helpless.

"Here is your grandmother, Aaron," Irene announced, the family gathered at the doorway, the Mets game audible. "Don't stay too long, she gets very tired."

Libby stood by Goodman near the bed. The old woman, conscious, opened her eyes and smiled in recognition. Libby addressed the family: "Perhaps Aaron would like to be with her alone for a few minutes."

Yes of course, of course, they all agreed, and moved back in one body, allowing the door to close. "Stay," Goodman said to Libby, who had moved away. "Grandma," he whispered.

The old woman, lying on her back, raised her arm to grasp his hand. "My boy," she exclaimed, with startling clarity. "You're such a grown-up."

"How are you?" Goodman asked, foolishly.

"Are you well?" Grandma asked.

"Extremely well," he answered, taking her fingers in his hand. "It's wonderful to see you. You look chipper, really."

How absurd he felt, allowing "chipper" out. The old woman's eyes were sunken, her face gray. He remembered her years ago. He remembered his mother's fondness for this old dame. He remembered them conspiring in the kitchen, giggling and moving around in there, the swinging door clamped tight, held fast by *The New York Times*. What had they been up to?

"Is your father active?" Grandma wanted to know.

"Yes, as always. He sends his love to you."

"What does he do by himself there in that big apartment?"

"Oh, he shuffles around, reads. Things like that." Goodman's father, long departed from the apartment of grandma's memory, had remarried and had become a father again; Goodman had a half brother ten years old. Grandma didn't know this; her daughter's death demanded a lifelong mourning, and this is what she herself had put in, bearing it quietly. It wouldn't be thinkable for Phil Goodman to marry again, have children, move from that place of theirs to new things.

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Grandma never thought it, never knew it.

"He is such a fine man," she said, smiling. "He loved your mother with all his heart. He respected her. He was a very generous man, you know."

The old woman is clear-minded, Goodman thought. Generosity, love, respect, were all real to her. And to him? Had he ever considered respect or generosity? Really? He was swept with guilt and melancholy; how futile the mechanics of the day seemed. He felt that he was advancing, step by step, to some unimaginable catastrophe; his life was a bitter mystery.

"How is business for you?" Grandma asked.

"Improving," Goodman answered.

"How is your family?"

"Father is quite well."

"And Francis?"

Goodman was stopped for the moment.

"She means your daughter." Libby whispered.

"Fine, Grandma. Very well." Goodman realized that Grandma was confusing him with Irene's son, Fred, who had retreated downstairs with the others, to attend to his daughter, Francis, a pretty child of four or five whose face Libby had cuddled in the living room.

"You're a good boy," Grandma said, holding Goodman's wrist. "Your mother loved you so."

"I know she did," he said.

"Are you staying for dinner?" Grandma asked, rather conversationally.

"No, we've got to get back to the city. We'll be back, though."

"How's your father?"

"Very well. Very well, Grandma. Grandma," Goodman said, pulling Libby to the side of the bed, "I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, Libby Bernstein. Libby, this is Grandma."

"I'm pleased to meet you," Libby said.

"What a beautiful young girl," Grandma said, looking up at Libby with a smile.

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"Aaron has told me so many things about you," Libby volunteered.

"You must stay for dinner, dear," Grandma said, as if she had prepared it herself.

"We'd like to," Libby answered, "but we've got to get home soon. I'm sorry."

Suddenly Grandma, gathering all her strength, slid herself to a half sitting position and leaned forward to the long bed table, groping for something just out of reach.

"What is it, Grandma? What can I get you?" Goodman asked.

"That ring there."

Goodman handed her the plain gold band that lay on the table.

"This is my wedding ring, Aaron," she said, addressing Goodman correctly. She held it in the palm of her right hand. Goodman knew immediately that she was going to offer it to him. Embarrassed, he thought quickly for some gracious refusal. "Please have it as a gift," the old woman said, extending her arm to Libby, not to Goodman.

Libby was shocked. "Oh, no, no. How kind of you."

"Please have it as a gift," the old woman repeated.

"No, oh you're so kind. I couldn't accept it. I really couldn't." Libby was deeply moved.

"I insist," Grandma said, almost sitting upright now, insisting.

"Oh," is all Libby could say. She sank to her knees and kissed the old woman's hand, and, tenderly, removed the ring from the palm.

"What a beautiful girl," Grandma said.

"I don't know what to say," Libby murmured.

"Are you sure, Grandma?" Goodman asked.

"A gift," the old woman repeated again.

"Well, Grandma—"

"Are you sure you can't stay for dinner?" the old woman asked.

"We must be going, Grandma," answered Goodman. He bent down to her and kissed her on the cheek. She settled

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back in bed and sighed heavily. "Thank you, Grandma," he said.

As they turned to leave, Grandma spoke again: "My love to your father."

"Of course, I'll tell him," Goodman said.

"Good-bye," the old woman added. "God be with you."

In the empty corridor by Grandma's closed door, and with the sounds of the family moving around below, Libby and Goodman embraced. On the stairs he asked her, "How did you remember the name Francis? When Grandma thought that—"

"It's the wildest thing," Libby interrupted. "Your grandmother seemed to make everything fit for me, you know? I mean, it's hard for me to explain, but once I saw her everyone in the family took on an identity for me. Irene, Francis, Helen, everyone. Down to you. I mean, you, too. Kind of like I saw the evolution of the family. Like I came across a complicated jigsaw puzzle in a million pieces on a card table and was able to put them all together in about five minutes."

"You know this family better than I do," Goodman responded.

"No, it's not that," Libby said to him. "It's just that you've never really tried."

True, Goodman thought, but did not reply.

***

Aunt Irene was all apologies when she reached Libby on the phone nine days later. She didn't want to bother Libby, she didn't wish to bother Goodman's father again having just called him a few short days ago for Aaron's address because Grandma was asking to see him. No, she didn't wish to bother anyone, but Goodman's phone wasn't listed and the telephone company wouldn't give it out, and Aunt Irene remembered Libby's name, and there was only one Libby Bernstein in the book, though many L. Bernsteins, so she just tried, that's all, and wasn't it fortunate that Libby was home, because Grandma had passed on that very morning and there would be a

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funeral service Wednesday and Aunt Irene thought Aaron should know.

"What can we do, we've got to go again," Aaron said to Libby.

"I don't mind," Libby answered.

Wednesday it rained furiously for the first time that summer. It fell continuously from early morning, and the skies darkened as the day progressed.

"This fine woman loved everything, every living creature," the eulogist, a Doctor Robert Proctor, was saying as Libby and Goodman arrived clamorously with umbrellas and rubbers and raincoats to be removed and set down somewhere. "She was a true and individual spirit, a person to whom it was more important to give than to receive, a person with the gift of giving." Doctor Proctor's name had been printed on white cards, copies of which were slipped to Libby and Goodman as they finally took their places, dripping and flustered, in the back of the Merriman Funeral Chapel of North Plainfield.

"This remarkable woman," Proctor continued, after bending low to sip from a glass of ice water, "was also given by God the remarkable gift of compassion for her fellow man. There wasn't a mean bone in her body."

This last notion struck Goodman as hilarious, and he glanced at Libby who sat next to him, her hands in her lap, her eyes closed.

"We will all cherish her memory. We will all know that she has gone to a peaceful world where her soul will be revered." Proctor, a gaunt, balding man, paused again for water. Then he concluded, "I speak for myself as well as for all the men and women gathered here this afternoon, when I say that she will remain in our thoughts and our hearts as long as there is breath in our bodies. She gave to us an everlasting light for which we should all be grateful. May God bless her and keep her. Thank you."

And then, to Goodman's surprise, music sprang up from everywhere. Looking around the room, he realized that the place contained six, seven, perhaps eight KLH speakers, all

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of them shrouded in green cloth, all with Martini ashtrays on top of them. Someone, however, had had the excellent taste to request the second movement of Bach's Double Violin Concerto, music that had always seemed to Goodman as the most majestic and deeply satisfying of all the great works of Bach. He was moved to take Libby's hand. How strange, he felt, that such a work should ever be heard in North Plainfield, New Jersey.

When the music finished, the ceremony was over. In a little while Aunt Irene approached them at their seats. "It was good of you to come," she said, shaking their hands solemnly. She was wearing a black veil, but Goodman could see that she had been crying. "We'd like to have you back to the house if you'd like to come. There will be refreshments, drinks if you like. Do come."

"We'd like that," Goodman said, astounded that from beneath the black veil Irene looked exactly like his own mother. Goodman remembered his mother's smile, a round, toothy grin, like his own.

At the house the family was subdued. The children, and there were more than the last time, were dressed in little blue suits with short pants, or pretty red dresses with puffy sleeves. Apparently they had been rehearsed in dignified behavior, for, after finding places to sit down, they stayed there, ankles crossed, hands in laps.

Goodman had a quick Scotch on the rocks and then another. Libby stayed at his side with a glass of sherry. "Watch your drinking, sweetie," she whispered.

"Who selected the music for the service?" Goodman asked Aunt Eve, the second oldest of his mother's sisters, who had come up to them from across the room with her hand extended, ready for shaking.

"I don't know, actually," Eve related confidentially.

"Would it have been the choice of the chapel itself or a request from within the family?" Goodman asked.

"You know, I don't know. Actually, it's a good question." Eve, with almost completely white hair, had chosen a black dress and silver pin for the occasion. She was a woman who

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had made the transition from attractive to handsome with ease. "I would imagine," she conjectured, "that something like that would be a family matter, wouldn't you? We're not actually a musical family, but it would seem to me that something like that would be a family matter altogether." She touched her hair gingerly.

"It was very beautiful," Libby said.

"It sounded fitting to me." Eve reflected on the music for a moment. Then she said, "Classical music is always fitting, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes," Goodman said. Eve, all smiles as she spoke, reminded him somehow of his own mother, outdoors. Could it have been a picnic or even a walk in the park? He could see his mother, running ahead, a white skirt flowing around her legs. Why was she running? Was she gathering flowers or blossoms? And where was he? Behind her? Yes. Carrying a baseball glove. *Wearing* a baseball glove, in fact. He saw himself in his full identity, Aaron Goodman, no middle name or initial. Aaron Goodman in sneakers, wearing a baseball mitt and a New York Giants hat. "If you don't take that hat off you'll be bald. The sweat will take your hair away," he had been told. By whom?

"Aaron feels very happy to see the family again after all this time," Libby was saying. "He told me today how glad he was that Irene called about Grandma."

"You know, we often think of Aaron and how he's doing. He's such a part of the family! My oh my. You know actually, Aaron, you're just exactly like your Mom. Really now. I mean it, you're just like her, same eyes, same features, same everything." Eve's eyes glistened.

"I didn't realize that," Goodman said.

"You've got that same creative drive that she had all her life. You know, she painted *so* wonderfully. We're not an artistic family in the *true* sense of the word, but your Mom, I tell you, she was *so* gifted."

Goodman was stunned at this. He had forgotten that his mother had spent hours in a small room off the kitchen, painting. She had an easel in there, he recalled, and all the

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other painting equipment. Why had he misplaced this information? Now individual paintings came back to him: a lot of still lifes, apples, pears, round fruit in dull bowls; greens and reds, bright colors. Trees, gardens. He couldn't remember faces. Had she done portraits?

"I never knew a mother and a son with such similar temperaments," Eve said. "Let's face it now. Actually, you were a very moody child, Aaron, I'm telling you." Eve broke into a hardy laugh. "When she was young, your mother had the *moodiest* temperament. She'd go off by herself for hours. Of course she was the youngest, so we made allowances."

Goodman had never properly considered his temperament. He imagined himself as an impatient man, demanding and selfish, who expected things to be done his way. He was giving and thoughtful with the right people, people he loved. He was sexually indiscriminate. He admired balance of perspective. He understood that there was no in-between about himself: people liked Aaron Goodman or disliked Aaron Goodman. No one could simply take him or leave him.

Irene joined them. Her face, uncovered, was tear-stained. Goodman observed that it could have been possible to wash the stains away in a feminine powder room somewhere, but Irene had chosen the affect of bereavement.

"We were talking about temperament," Eve said to her sister. "Aaron and his mother are twins in that respect, don't you think?"

"Oh definitely," Irene agreed. "Exactly."

"I'm surprised to hear that," Libby said.

"Aaron has all his mother's grand qualities," Irene said. "I really can't get over how much you've grown, Aaron. Don't misunderstand me, I just mean it's been a long time."

"I don't mind at all," he said. "You make me feel young."

They all laughed. Libby took Goodman's hand. "I think we should go soon," she said.

"Another drink, I think," Goodman responded.

"You certainly have a fine taste for women, Aaron," Eve suggested slyly.

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"She's tolerant," Goodman answered. "Happily, she's tolerant."

★★★

The rain eased up during the drive home. They rode in silence, Libby's arm curled around his. Goodman was thinking of his mother in a white skirt, running ahead of him; he couldn't place where. He had her clearly in his mind now. He regarded her: a small woman with a round face and short light-brown hair. A trim woman, desirable, he imagined, with a good strong voice, a very clear voice. An easily pleased woman.

Then he remembered. The picnic grounds of the Griffith Planetarium in California. He couldn't have been older than eight, possibly nine. They were there, just the two of them, with their own lunch: American cheese sandwiches, Pepsi-Colas, persimmons, Oreos. A dozen squirrels watched them from respectable distances. After lunch his mother had stretched him out and had rubbed his back, pulling his shirt up, a red polo shirt with the words ZION NATIONAL PARK in gold letters on a breast pocket. She had kissed his spine. He had kept his New York Giants hat on and had drifted to sleep in the fallen leaves.

"Will you stay with me tonight?" Libby asked.

"Naturally," he answered.

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Mahmoud Darwish

A Song and the Sultan

It was no more than the description of a burst of rain
and handkerchiefs of lightning which burned the secret of
trees—
then why did they resist her?

When she said that something different from this water
runs in the river
and the people of the shore are statues and other things,
why did they torture her?

When she told them the forest was abounding with secrets
and the moon was stabbed with a carving knife
and the blood of the nightingale was on that stone, abandoned,
why did they resist her?
Why did they torture her?

When she said, my country is a mountain of sweat
and on the small bridge a man is dying
and darkness burning
the Sultan was angry
and the Sultan is an imaginative creature.

He said, "The fault is in the mirror
so let your singer be silent
and let my kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates be."
and he shouted, "Put that poem in prison!"
The torture room, for security,
is a thousand times better than an anthem or a newspaper.

Go and tell the Sultan
that the wind cannot be wounded by the shake of a sword
that millions of trees can become green
in the cupped hand of a single letter.

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But the Sultan was angry, and the Sultan is everywhere
on stamps, in psalms,
and on his forehead is the tattoo of hunting.

He shouted, "It is ordered!
Execute this poem!"
Execution Square is the best anthology for obstinate sons.

Go and tell the Sultan
that lightning cannot be imprisoned in a corncob
that songs are the logic of the sun
and the history of sheaves
and the nature of earthquakes.

That songs like tree trunks may die in one land
but sprout in every country.
The blue sun was an idea
the Sultan tried to submerge
but it became the birthday of an ember

and the red sun has become an ember
which the Sultan in vain imprisoned
and suddenly the fire
is a revolution!

The voices of blood
have taken the tone of a tempest
and the pebbles of the Square are becoming
like open wounds
and I laugh, awed by the birth of the wind.

When the Sultan resisted me
I grasped the key of the morning
and groped my way with the lamps of wounds.
Oh how wise I was when I gave my heart
to the call of the tempest!

Let the tempest roar,
O let the tempest roar . . .!

Translated from the Arabic by Rose Styron

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Muin Beseisu

Fingernail Poem

on the windowpanes
on the porcupine's skin
on the curtains
on braids
on the plates in restaurants
and the hats, buttons, rings
I wrote this poem.

In the night, when the newspaper's
proofreader died
he died without reading the proof.

I wrote it in coal
on snow
and on new shoes
for the ink has become like mud
and the paper, how miserable the paper is!

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I Want To See

I cannot tell you when, where
in what city or time
I saw this crime.

It might have happened yesterday,
today, or yet tomorrow,
but I know this.

The killers came for the poet,
five of the knights of the Arab
Al-Haajab

were and will be Everyplace.
And the poem was there
On the walls of the narrow

street, a wrathful poem
Against Louis the First
or the Twenty-first

and his cells, knives, plans.
And the order came:
"Wipe it off with your hands!"

His hand began to wipe the first
line out. At the twentieth line
his two hands melted.

And he started to wipe out
the twenty-first line with his tongue.
At the twenty-fifth line his tongue melted

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And only the last line could be sung
and he started to wipe that out
with his whole face.

Look at your own:
Who among us has kept his face?
Who among us has hands?

I cannot tell you where, when,
I saw that crime—
The poet's blood is shed in every time—

But I know this:
I want to see that man.
I want to see that man.

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For an American Tourist

Pardon me, my lady,
but since you have come to us
on the very day when the poet's hands were cut off
what is there in the Orient left for sale?

We have already sold to an old lady tourist before you
the Tomb of Saladin, the Battle of the Hittites,
and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
We sold them in the markets of the world

blossom and bud,
the finger and the ring, we sold.
Nothing is left but the pyramids.
How heavy the stones of the pyramids are!

The Sphinx is stabbed
and it will die
if taken away from this land,
even if out of its forehead the knife is drawn.

Pardon me, my lady,
we sold the last sarcophagus,
we threw the last inkpots into the Nile
and we slit the throat of the last cock that crowed.

All that remains is God
running like a green gazelle
pursued by every hunting dog
pursued by the lie which rides on a pure Arabian steed.

For you we will chase that steed.
For you, we will hunt down God.
My lady,
those who sold the poet will sell God.

Translated from the Arabic by Rose Styron

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Julien Blaine

Eighteenth

It was made of pulp and flesh
It was fruit pulp
It was clayish flesh
Was it perhaps the wind that mingled the cries of animals?
"The trees' breathing?"
That is why uprooted fields meandered in the midst of roads
clay shot up in corollas
the nodes of telegraph wires showed traces of the trees
there in the distance moonless skies

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Twenty-seventh

One of rain of almond-blossom,
the glance is filtered in the plaited reflection of glass buildings;
looking for glances infiltrated in undersea waves.

One of rain in the plaited reflection of glass buildings,
the glance is filtered in undersea waves;
looking for glances of almond-blossom.

One of rain in undersea waves,
the glance is filtered in almond-blossom;
looking for glances in the plaited reflection of glass buildings.

I n f i l t r a t e d !

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Thirtieth

Sound a brake followed nothing it's flower withers between ninety-two cobblestones. Sound braking followed by bouquet of junk clattering, broadens into sound organ, middle of the street.

Ships in ports not to float on circles in petroleum sky, not sea, not at sea. Sea's for jellyfish upside down raise tentacles like masts.

One day towers departed castle for windmills, at Emnoelie fair, are two pairs of arms full of fingers and time to time castle towers greeted one another. Today have become street-mills, will always be for mills for wool or mills for

Translated from the French

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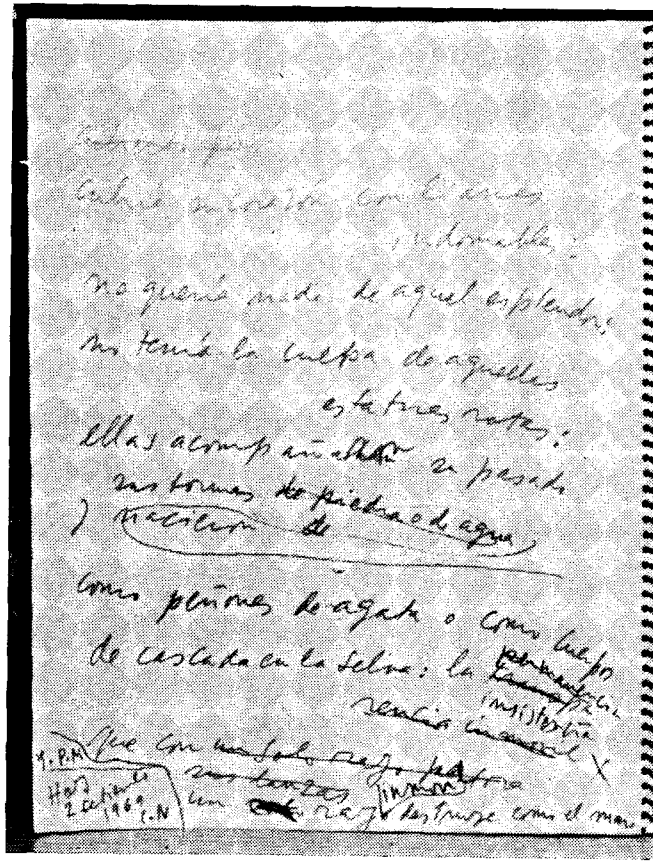

Pablo Neruda manuscript

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The Art of Poetry XIV

Pablo Neruda

"I have never thought of my life as divided between poetry and politics," Pablo Neruda (born Ricardo Neftalí Reyes Basoalto) said in his September 30, 1969, acceptance speech as the Chilean Communist Party candidate for the presidency. "I am a Chilean who for decades has known the misfortunes and difficulties of our national existence and who has taken part in each sorrow and joy of the people. I am not a stranger to them, I come from them, I am

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part of the people. I come from a working class family.... I have never been in with those in power and have always felt that my vocation and my duty was to serve the Chilean people in my actions and with my poetry. I have lived singing and defending them."

Because of a divided left, Neruda withdrew his candidacy after four months of hard campaigning and resigned in order to support a Popular Unity candidate. This interview was conducted in his house at Isla Negra in January, 1970, just before his resignation.

Isla Negra (Black Island) is neither black nor an island. It is an elegant beach resort forty kilometers south of Valparaiso and a two hour drive from Santiago. No one knows where the name comes from; Neruda speculates about black rocks vaguely shaped like an island which he sees from his terrace. Thirty years ago, long before Isla Negra became fashionable, Neruda bought—with the royalties of his books—6000 square meters of beach front, which included a tiny stone house at the top of a steep slope. "Then the house started growing, like the people, like the trees."

Neruda has other houses—one on San Cristobal Hill in Santiago and the other in Valparaiso. To decorate his houses he has scoured antique shops and junk yards for all kinds of objects. Each object reminds him of an anecdote. "Doesn't he look like Stalin?" he asks, pointing to a bust of the English adventurer Morgan in the dining room at Isla Negra. "The antique dealer in Paris didn't want to sell it to me, but when he heard I was Chilean, he asked me if I knew Pablo Neruda. That's how I persuaded him to sell it."

It is at Isla Negra where Pablo Neruda, the "terrestrial navigator," and his third wife, Matilde Urrutia ("Patoja," as he affectionately calls her, the "muse" to whom he has written many love poems) have established their most permanent residence.

Tall, stocky, of olive complexion, his outstanding features are a prominent nose and large brown eyes with hooded eyelids. His movements are slow but firm. He speaks distinctly, without pomposity. When he goes for a walk—usually accompanied by his two chows—he wears a long poncho and carries a rustic cane.

At Isla Negra Neruda entertains a constant stream of visitors and there is always room at the table for last-minute guests. Neruda does most of his entertaining in the bar, which one enters through

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a small corridor from a terrace facing the beach. On the corridor floor is a Victorian bidet and an old hand organ. On the window shelves there is a collection of bottles. The bar is decorated as a ship's salon, with furniture bolted to the floor and nautical lamps and paintings. The room has glass-panel walls facing the sea. On the ceiling and on each of the wood crossbeams a carpenter has carved, from Neruda's handwriting, names of his dead friends.

Behind the bar, on the liquor shelf, is a sign that says "No se fia" *(No credit here). Neruda takes his role as bartender very seriously and likes to make elaborate drinks for his guests although he drinks only Scotch and wine. On a wall are two anti-Neruda posters—one which he brought back from his last trip to Caracas. It shows his profile with the legend: "Neruda go home." The other is a cover from an Argentine magazine with his picture and the copy: "Neruda, why doesn't he kill himself?" A huge poster of Twiggy stretches from the ceiling to the floor.*

Meals at Isla Negra are typically Chilean. Neruda has mentioned some of them in his poetry: conger eel soup; fish with a delicate sauce of tomatoes and baby shrimp; meat pie. The wine is always Chilean. One of the porcelain wine pitchers, shaped like a bird, sings when wine is poured. In the summer, lunch is served on a porch facing a garden which has an antique railroad engine. "So powerful, such a corn picker, such a procreator and whistler and roarer and thunderer... I love it because it looks like Walt Whitman."

Conversations for the interview were held in short sessions. In the morning—after Neruda had his breakfast in his room—we met in the library which is a new wing of the house. I would wait while he answered his mail, composed poems for his new book, or corrected the galleys of a new Chilean edition of Twenty Love Poems, *which was first published in 1924, and has sold almost two million copies. Composing poetry, he writes with green ink in an ordinary composition book. He can write a fairly long poem in a very short time, after which he makes only a few corrections. The poems are then typed by his secretary and close friend of more than fifty years, Homero Arce.*

In the afternoon, after his daily nap, we sat on a stone bench on the terrace facing the sea. Neruda would talk holding the microphone

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of the tape recorder which picked up the sound of the sea as background to his voice.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you change your name, and why did you choose "Pablo Neruda"?

NERUDA

I don't remember. I was only thirteen or fourteen years old. I remember that it bothered my father very much that I wanted to write. With the best of intentions, he thought that writing would bring destruction to the family and myself and, especially, that it would lead me to a life of complete uselessness. He had domestic reasons for thinking so, reasons which did not weigh heavily on me. It was one of the first defensive measures that I adopted—changing my name.

INTERVIEWER

Did you choose "Neruda" because of the Czech poet Jean Neruda?

NERUDA

I'd read a short story of his. I've never read his poetry, but he has a book entitled *Stories of Mala Strana* about the humble people of that neighborhood in Prague. It is possible that my new name came from there. As I say, the whole matter is so far back in my memory that I don't recall. Nevertheless, the Czechs think of me as one of them, as part of their nation, and I've had a very friendly connection with them.

INTERVIEWER

In case you are elected President of Chile, will you keep on writing?

NERUDA

For me writing is like breathing. I could not live without breathing and I could not live without writing.

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INTERVIEWER

Who are the poets who have aspired to high political office and succeeded?

NERUDA

Our period is an era of governing poets: Mao-Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh. Mao-Tse-tung has other qualities: as you know he is a great swimmer, something which I am not. There is also a great poet, Léopold Senghor, who is president of Senegal; another, Aimé Césaire, a surrealist poet, is the mayor of Fort-de-France in Martinique. In my country, poets have always intervened in politics, though we have never had a poet who was President of the Republic. On the other hand, there have been writers in Latin America who have been president: Rómulo Gallegos was President of Venezuela.

INTERVIEWER

How have you been running your presidential campaign?

NERUDA

A platform is set up. First there are always folk songs, and then someone in charge explains the strictly political scope of our campaign. After that, the note I strike in order to talk to the townspeople is a much freer one, much less organized; it is more poetic. I almost always finish by reading poetry. If I didn't read some poetry, the people would go away disillusioned. Of course they also want to hear my political thoughts, but I don't overwork the political or economic aspects because people also need another kind of language.

INTERVIEWER

How do the people react when you read your poems?

NERUDA

They love me in a very emotional way. I can't enter or leave some places. I have a special escort which protects me from the crowds because the people press around me. That happens everywhere.

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INTERVIEWER

If you had to choose between the Presidency of Chile and the Nobel Prize, for which you have been mentioned so often—which would you choose?

NERUDA

There can be no question of a decision between such illusory things.

INTERVIEWER

But if they put the Presidency and the Nobel Prize right here on a table?

NERUDA

If they put them on the table in front of me, I'd get up and sit at another table.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think awarding the Nobel Prize to Samuel Beckett was just?

NERUDA

Yes, I believe so. Beckett writes short but exquisite things. The Nobel Prize, wherever it falls, is always an honor to literature. I am not one of those always arguing whether the prize went to the right person or not. What is important about this prize—if it has any importance—is that it confers a title of respect on the office of writer. That is what is important.

INTERVIEWER

What are your strongest memories?

NERUDA

I don't know. The most intense memories, perhaps, are those of my life in Spain—in that great brotherhood of poets; I've never known such a fraternal group in our American world—so full of *alacraneos* (gossips) as they say in Buenos

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Aires. Then, afterwards, it was terrible to see that republic of friends destroyed by the Civil War, which so demonstrated the horrible reality of fascist repression. My friends were scattered: some were exterminated right there—like García Lorca and Miguel Hernández; others died in exile, and still others live on in exile. That whole phase of my life was rich in events, in profound emotions, and decisively changed the evolution of my life.

INTERVIEWER

Would they allow you to enter Spain now?

NERUDA

I'm not officially forbidden to enter. On one occasion I was invited to give some readings there by the Chilean Embassy. It is very possible that they would let me enter. But I don't want to make a point of it, because it simply may have been convenient for the Spanish government to show some democratic feeling by permitting the entry of people who had fought so hard against it. I don't know. I have been prevented from entering so many countries and I have been turned out of so many others that, truly, this is a matter which no longer causes the irritation in me that it did at first.

INTERVIEWER

In a certain way, your ode to García Lorca, which you wrote before he died, predicted his tragic end.

NERUDA

Yes, that poem is strange. Strange because he was such a happy person, such a cheerful creature. I've known very few people like him. He was the incarnation... well, let's not say of success, but of the love of life. He enjoyed each minute of his existence—a great spendthrift of happiness. For that reason, the crime of his execution is one of the most unpardonable crimes of fascism.

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INTERVIEWER

You often mention him in your poems, as well as Miguel Hernández.

NERUDA

Hernández was like a son. As a poet, he was something of my disciple, and he almost lived in my house. He went to prison and died there because he disproved the official version of García Lorca's death. If their explanation was correct, why did the fascist government keep Miguel Hernández in prison until his death? Why did they even refuse to move him to a hospital as the Chilean Embassy proposed? The death of Miguel Hernández was an assassination too.

INTERVIEWER

What do you remember most from your years in India?

NERUDA

My stay there was an encounter I wasn't prepared for. The splendor of that unfamiliar continent overwhelmed me, and yet I felt desperate, because my life and my solitude there were so long. Sometimes I seemed locked into an unending technicolor picture—a marvelous movie, but one I wasn't allowed to leave. I never experienced the mysticism which guided so many South Americans and other foreigners in India. People who go to India in search of a religious answer to their anxieties see things in a different way. As for me, I was profoundly moved by the sociological conditions—that immense unarmed nation, so defenseless, bound to its imperial yoke. Even the English culture, for which I had a great predilection, seemed hateful to me for being the instrument of the intellectual submission of so many Hindus at that time. I mixed with the rebellious young people of that continent; in spite of my consular post, I got to know all the revolutionaries—those in the great movement that eventually brought about independence.

INTERVIEWER

Was it in India that you wrote *Residence on Earth?*

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NERUDA

Yes, though India had very little intellectual influence on my poetry.

INTERVIEWER

It was from India that you wrote those very moving letters to the Argentine, Hector Eandi?

NERUDA

Yes. Those letters were important in my life, because he, a writer I did not know personally, took it upon himself, as a good Samaritan, to send me news, to send me periodicals, to help me through my great solitude. I had become afraid of losing contact with my own language—for years I met no one to speak Spanish to. In one letter to Rafael Alberti I had to ask for a Spanish dictionary. I had been appointed to the post of consul, but it was a low-grade post and one that had no stipend. I lived in the greatest poverty and in even greater solitude. For weeks I didn't see another human being.

INTERVIEWER

While there you had a great romance with Josie Bliss, whom you mention in many poems.

NERUDA

Yes, Josie Bliss was a woman who left quite a profound imprint on my poetry. I have always remembered her, even in my most recent books.

INTERVIEWER

Your work, then, is closely linked to your personal life?

NERUDA

Naturally. The life of a poet must be reflected in his poetry. That is the law of the art and a law of life.

INTERVIEWER

Your work can be divided into stages, can't it?

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NERUDA

I have quite confusing thoughts about that. I myself don't have stages; the critics discover them. If I can say anything, it is that my poetry has the quality of an organism—infantile when I was a boy, juvenile when I was young, desolate when I suffered, combative when I had to enter the social struggle. A mixture of these tendencies is present in my current poetry. I always wrote out of internal necessity and I imagine that this is what happens with all writers, poets especially.

INTERVIEWER

I've seen you writing in the car.

NERUDA

I write where I can and when I can, but I'm always writing.

INTERVIEWER

Do you always write everything in longhand?

NERUDA

Ever since I had an accident in which I broke a finger and couldn't use the typewriter for a few months, I have followed the custom of my youth and gone back to writing by hand. I discovered when my finger was better and I could type again that my poetry when written by hand was more sensitive; its plastic forms could change more easily. In an interview, Robert Graves says that in order to think one should have as little as possible around that is not handmade. He could have added that poetry ought to be written by hand. The typewriter separated me from a deeper intimacy with poetry, and my hand brought me closer to that intimacy again.

INTERVIEWER

What are your working hours?

NERUDA

I don't have a schedule, but by preference I write in the morning. Which is to say that if you weren't here making me

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waste my time (and wasting your own), I would be writing. I don't read many things during the day. I would rather write all day, but frequently the fullness of a thought, of an expression, of something that comes out of myself in a tumultuous way—let's label it with an antiquated term: "inspiration"—leaves me satisfied, or exhausted, or calmed, or empty. That is, I can't go on. Apart from that, I like living too much to be seated all day at a desk. I like to put myself in the goings on of life, of my house, of politics and of nature. I am forever coming and going. But I write intensely whenever I can and wherever I am. It doesn't bother me that there may be a lot of people around.

INTERVIEWER

You cut yourself off totally from what surrounds you?

NERUDA

I cut myself off, and if everything is suddenly quiet, then that is disturbing to me.

INTERVIEWER

You have never given much consideration to prose.

NERUDA

Prose... I have felt the necessity of writing in verse all my life. Expression in prose doesn't interest me. I use prose to express a certain kind of fleeting emotion or event, really tending toward narrative. The truth is that I could give up writing in prose entirely. I only do it temporarily.

INTERVIEWER

If you had to save your works from a fire, what would you save?

NERUDA

Possibly none of them. What am I going to need them for? I would rather save a girl... or a good collection of detective stories... which would entertain me much more than my own works.

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INTERVIEWER

Which of your critics has best understood your work?

NERUDA

Oh! My critics! My critics have almost shredded me to pieces, with all the love or hate in the world! In life, as in art, one can't please everybody, and that's a situation that's always with us. One is always receiving kisses and slaps, caresses and kicks, and that is the life of a poet. What bothers me is the distortion in the interpretation of poetry or the events of one's life. For example, during the P.E.N. Club Congress in New York, which brought together so many people from different places, I read my social poems, and even more of them in California—poems dedicated to Cuba in support of the Cuban Revolution. Yet the Cuban writers signed a letter and distributed millions of copies in which my opinions were doubted, and in which I was singled out as a creature protected by the North Americans; they even suggested that my entry into the United States was a kind of prize! That is perfectly stupid, if not slanderous, since many writers from socialist countries *did* come in; even the arrival of Cuban writers was expected. We did not lose our character as anti-imperialists by going to New York. Nevertheless that was suggested, either through the hastiness or bad faith of the Cuban writers. The fact that at this present moment I am my party's candidate for President of the Republic shows that I have a truly revolutionary history. It would be difficult to find *any* writers who signed that letter who could compare in dedication to revolutionary work, who could equal even one hundredth of what I have done and fought for.

INTERVIEWER

You have been criticized for the way you live, and for your economic position.

NERUDA

In general, that's all a myth. In a certain sense, we have received a rather bad legacy from Spain, which could never

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bear to have its people stand out or be distinguished in anything. They chained Christopher Columbus on his return to Spain. We get that from the envious *petite bourgeoisie*, who go around thinking about what others have and about what they *don't* have. In my own case, I have dedicated my life to reparations for the people, and what I have in my house—my books—is the product of my own work. I have exploited no one. It is odd. The sort of reproach *I* get is never made to writers who are rich by birth right! Instead, it is made to *me*—a writer who has fifty years of work behind him. They are always saying: "Look, look how he lives. He has a house facing the sea. He drinks good wine." What nonsense. To begin with, it's hard to drink bad wine in Chile because almost all the wine in Chile is good. It's a problem which, in a certain way, reflects the underdevelopment of our country—in sum, the mediocrity of our ways. You yourself have told me that Norman Mailer was paid some ninety-thousand dollars for three articles in a North American magazine. Here, if a Latin American writer should receive such compensation for his work, it would arouse a wave of protest from the other writers—"What an outrage! How terrible! Where is it going to stop?"—instead of everyone's being pleased that a writer can demand such fees. Well, as I say, these are the misfortunes which go by the name of cultural underdevelopment.

INTERVIEWER

Isn't this accusation more intense because you belong to the Communist Party?

NERUDA

Precisely. He who has nothing—it has been said many times—has nothing to lose but his chains. I risk, at every moment, my life, my person, all that I have—my books, my house. My house has been burned; I have been persecuted; I have been detained more than once; I have been exiled; they have declared me incommunicado; I have been sought by thousands of police. Very well then. I'm *not* comfortable with what I have. So what I have, I have put at the disposal of

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the people's fight, and this very house you're in has belonged for twenty years to the Communist Party to whom I have given it by public writ. I am in this house simply through the generosity of my party. All right, let those who reproach me do the same and at least leave their shoes somewhere so that they can be passed on to somebody else!

INTERVIEWER

You have donated various libraries. Aren't you now involved in the project of the writers' colony at Isla Negra?

NERUDA

I have donated more than one entire library to my country's university. I live on the income from my books. I don't have any savings. I don't have anything to dispose of, except for what I am paid each month from my books. With that income, lately, I've been acquiring a large piece of land on the coast so that writers in the future will be able to pass summers there and do their creative work in an atmosphere of extraordinary beauty. It will be the Cantalao Foundation—with directors from the Catholic University, the University of Chile, and the Society of Writers.

INTERVIEWER

Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song, one of your first books, has been and continues to be read by thousands of admirers.

NERUDA

I had said in the prologue to the edition which celebrated the publication of one million copies of that book—soon there will be two million copies—that I really don't understand what it's all about—why this book, a book of love-sadness, of love-pain, continues to be read by so many people, by so many young people. Truly, I do not understand it. Perhaps this book represents the youthful posing of many enigmas; perhaps it represents the answers to those enigmas. It is a mournful book, but its attractiveness has not worn off.

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INTERVIEWER

You are one of the most widely translated poets—into about thirty languages. Into what languages are you best translated?

NERUDA

I would say into Italian, because of the similarity between the two languages. English and French, which are the two languages I know outside of Italian, are languages which do not correspond to Spanish—neither in vocalization, or in the placement, or the color, or the weight of the words. It is not a question of interpretative equivalence; no, the sense can be right, but this correctness of translation, of meaning, can be the destruction of a poem. In many of the translations into French—I don't say in all of them—my poetry escapes, nothing remains; one cannot protest because it says the same thing that one has written. But it is obvious, that if I had been a French poet, I would not have said what I did in that poem, because the value of the words is so different. I would have written something else.

INTERVIEWER

And in English?

NERUDA

I find the English language so different from Spanish—so much more direct—that many times it expresses the meaning of my poetry, but does not convey the atmosphere of my poetry. It may be that the same thing happens when an English poet is translated into Spanish.

INTERVIEWER

You said that you are a great reader of detective stories. Who are your favorite authors?

NERUDA

A great literary work of this type of writing is Eric Ambler's *A Coffin for Dimitrios*. I've read practically all of Am-

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bler's work since then, but none has the fundamental perfection, the extraordinary intrigue, and the mysterious atmosphere of *A Coffin for Dimitrios*. Simenon is also very important, but it's James Hadley Chase who surpasses in terror, in horror, and in the destructive spirit everything else that has been written. *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* is an old book, but it doesn't cease being a milestone of the detective story. There's a strange similarity between *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*—that very disagreeable but important book—but I've never been able to determine which was the *first* of the two. Of course, whenever the detective story is spoken of, I think of Dashiell Hammett. He is the one who changed the genre from a subliterary phantasm and gave it a strong backbone. He is the great creator, and after him there are hundreds of others, John McDonald among the most brilliant. All of them are prolific writers and they work extraordinarily hard. And almost all of the North American novelists of this school —the detective novel—are perhaps the most severe critics of the crumbling North American capitalist society. There is no greater denunciation than that which turns up in those detective novels about the fatigue and corruption of the politicians and the police, the influence of money in the big cities, the corruption which pops up in all parts of the North American system, in "the American way of life." It is, possibly, the most dramatic testimony to an epoch, and yet it is considered the flimsiest accusation since detective stories are not taken into account by literary critics.

INTERVIEWER

What other books do you read?

NERUDA

I am a reader of history, especially of the older chronicles of my country. Chile has an extraordinary history. Not because of monuments or ancient sculptures, which don't exist here, but rather because Chile was invented by a poet, Don Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, page of Carlos V. He was a

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Basque aristocrat who arrived with the conquistadores—quite unusual since most of the people sent to Chile came out of the dungeons. This was the hardest place to live. The war between the Araucanians and the Spanish went on here for centuries, the longest civil war in the history of humanity. The semi-savage tribes of Araucania fought for their liberty against the Spanish invaders for three hundred years. Don Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, the young humanist, came with the enslavers who wanted to dominate all America and *did* dominate it, with the exception of this bristly and savage territory we call Chile. Don Alonso wrote *The Araucana*, the longest epic in Castilian literature, in which he honored the unknown tribes of Araucania, anonymous heroes to whom he gave a name for the first time, more than his compatriots, the Castilian soldiers. *The Araucana*, published in the 16th century, was translated, and traveled in various versions through all of Europe. A great poem by a great poet. The history of Chile thus had this epic greatness and heroism at birth. We Chileans, quite unlike the other crossbred people of Spanish and Indian America, are not descended from the Spanish soldiers and their rapes or concubinages, but from either the voluntary or forced marriages of the Araucanians with Spanish women held captive during those long war years. We are a certain exception. Of course, then comes our bloody history of independence after 1810, a history full of tragedies, disagreements and struggles in which the names of San Martín and Bolívar, José Miguel Carrera and O'Higgins carry on through interminable pages of successes and misfortunes. All this makes me a reader of books which I unearth and dust off and which entertain me enormously as I search for the significance of this country—so remote from everybody, so cold in its latitudes, so deserted... its saltpeter pampas in the north, its immense patagonias, so snowy in the Andes, so florid by the sea. And this is my country, Chile. I am one of those Chileans in perpetuity, one who, no matter how well they treat me elsewhere, must return to my country. I like the great cities of Europe: I adore the Arno Valley, and certain streets of Copenhagen and Stockholm, and naturally,

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Paris, Paris, Paris, and yet I still have to return to Chile.

INTERVIEWER

In an article entitled "My Contemporaries," Ernesto Montenegro criticizes the Uruguayan critic Rodríguez Monegal for expressing the vain wish that contemporary European and North American writers study their Latin American colleagues if they want to achieve the renovation of their prose. Montenegro jokes that it is like the ant saying to the elephant: "Climb on my shoulders." Then he cites Borges: "In contrast to the barbarous United States, this country (this continent) has not produced a writer of world-wide influence —an Emerson, a Whitman, a Poe... neither has it produced a great esoteric writer—a Henry James, or a Melville."

NERUDA

Why is it important if we do or don't have names like those of Whitman, Baudelaire or Kafka on our continent? The history of literary creation is as large as humanity. We can't impose an etiquette. The United States, with an overwhelmingly literate population, and Europe, with an ancient tradition, can't be compared to our multitudes in Latin America without books or means of expressing themselves. But to pass time throwing stones at one another, to spend one's life hoping to surpass this or that continent seems a provincial sentiment to me. Besides, all this can be a matter of individual opinion.

INTERVIEWER

Would you like to comment on literary affairs in Latin America?

NERUDA

Whether a magazine is from Honduras, or New York (in Spanish) or Montevideo or from Guayaquil, we discover that almost all present the same catalogue of fashionable literature influenced by Eliot or Kafka. It's an example of cultural colonialism. We are still involved in European etiquette.

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Here in Chile, for example, the mistress of the house will show you anything—China plates—and tell you with a satisfied smile: "It's imported." Most of the horrible porcelain exhibited in millions of Chilean homes is imported, and it's of the worst kind, produced in the factories of Germany and France. These pieces of nonsense are accepted as top quality because they have been imported.

INTERVIEWER

Is fear of non-conformity responsible?

NERUDA

Certainly in the old days everybody was scared of revolutionary ideas, particularly writers. In this decade, and especially after the Cuban Revolution, the current fashion is just the opposite. Writers live in terror that they will *not* be taken for extreme leftists, so each of them assumes a guerrilla-like position. There are many writers who only write texts which assert that they are in the front lines of the war against imperialism. Those of us who have continually fought that war see with joy that literature is placing itself on the side of the people; but we also believe that if it's only a matter of fashion and a writer's fear of not being taken for an active leftist, well, we are not going to get very far with that kind of revolutionary. In the end, all sorts of animals fit into the literary forest. Once, when I had been offended for many years by a few pertinacious persecutors who seemed to live only to attack my poetry and my life, I said: "Let's leave them alone, there is room for all in this jungle; if there's space for the elephants, who take up such a lot of room in the jungles of Africa and Ceylon, then surely there's space for all the poets."

INTERVIEWER

Some people accuse you of being antagonistic toward Jorge Luis Borges.

NERUDA

The antagonism towards Borges may exist in an intel-

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lectual or cultural form because of our different orientation. One can fight peacefully. But I have other enemies—not writers. For me the enemy is imperialism and my enemies are the capitalists and those who drop napalm on Vietnam. But Borges is not my enemy.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think about Borges' writing?

NERUDA

He is a great writer and people who speak Spanish are very proud that Borges exists—above all, the people of Latin America. Before Borges we had very few writers who could stand in comparison with the writers of Europe. We have had great writers, but a writer of the universal type, like Borges, is not found very often in our countries. I cannot say that he has been the *greatest*, and I hope he will be surpassed many times by others, but in every way he has opened the way and attracted attention, the intellectual curiosity of Europe, toward our countries. But for me to fight with Borges, because everybody wants me to—I'll never do it. If he thinks like a dinosaur, well that has nothing to do with my thinking. He understands nothing of what's going on in the contemporary world; he thinks that I understand nothing either. Therefore, we are in agreement.

INTERVIEWER

On Sunday we saw some young Argentines who were playing guitars and singing a *milonga* by Borges. That pleased you, didn't it?

NERUDA

Borges' *milonga* pleased me greatly—most of all because it is an example of how such a hermetic poet—let's use that term—such a sophisticated and intellectual poet can turn to a popular theme, doing it with such a true and certain touch. I liked Borges' *milonga* very much. Latin American poets ought to imitate his example.

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INTERVIEWER

Have you written any Chilean folk music?

NERUDA

I've written some songs which are very well known in this country.

INTERVIEWER

Who are the Russian poets you like most?

NERUDA

The dominant figure in Russian poetry continues to be Mayakovsky. He is for the Russian Revolution what Walt Whitman was for the Industrial Revolution in North America. Mayakovsky impregnated poetry in such a way that almost all the poetry has continued being Mayakovskian.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think about the Russian writers who have left Russia?

NERUDA

People who want to leave a place ought to do so. This is really a rather individual problem. Some Soviet writers may feel themselves dissatisfied with their relationship to the literary organizations or with their own state. But I have never seen less disagreement between a state and the writers than in socialist countries. The majority of Soviet writers are proud of the socialist structure, of the great war of liberation against the Nazis, of the people's role in the revolution and in the great war, and proud of the structures created by socialism. If there are exceptions, it is a personal question and it is correspondingly necessary to examine each case individually.

INTERVIEWER

But the creative work cannot be free. It must always reflect the state's line of thought.

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NERUDA

It's an exaggeration to say that. I have known many writers and painters who have absolutely no intention of eulogizing this or that in the state. There is a kind of conspiracy to suggest that this is the case. But, it's not so. Of course, every revolution needs to mobilize its forces. A revolution cannot persist without development: the very commotion provoked by the change from capitalism to socialism cannot last unless the revolution demands, and with all its power, the support of all the strata of society—including the writers, intellectuals and artists. Think about the American Revolution, or our own war of independence against imperial Spain. What would have happened if just subsequent to those events the writers dedicated themselves to subjects like the monarchy, or the restitution of English power over the United States, or the Spanish king's over former colonies. If any writer or artist had exalted colonialism he would have been persecuted. It's with even greater justification that a revolution which wants to construct a society starting from zero (after all, the step from capitalism or private property to socialism and communism has never been tried before) must by its own force mobilize the aid of intellect. Such a procedure can bring about conflicts; it is only human and political that these occur. But I hope that with time and stability the socialist societies will have less need to have their writers constantly thinking about social problems, and that they will be able to create what they most intimately desire.

INTERVIEWER

What advice would you give to young poets?

NERUDA

Oh, there is no advice to give to young poets! They ought to make their own way; they will have to encounter the obstacles to their expression and they have to overcome them. What I would never advise them to do is to begin with political poetry. Political poetry is more profoundly emotional than any other—at least as much as love poetry—and can-

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not be forced because it then becomes vulgar and unacceptable. It is necessary first to pass through all other poetry in order to become a political poet. The political poet must also be prepared to accept the censure which is thrown at him—betraying poetry, or betraying literature. Then too, political poetry has to arm itself with such content and substance and intellectual and emotional richness that it is able to scorn everything else. This is rarely achieved.

INTERVIEWER

You have often said that you don't believe in originality.

NERUDA

To look for originality at all costs is a modern condition. In our time, the writer wants to call attention to himself, and this superficial preoccupation takes on fetishistic characteristics. Each person tries to find a road whereby he will stand out, neither for profundity nor for discovery, but for the imposition of a special diversity. The most original artist will change phases in accord with the time, the epoch. The great example is Picasso, who begins by nourishing himself from the painting and sculpture of Africa or the primitive arts, and then goes on with such a power of transformation that his works, characterized by his splendid originality, seem to be stages in the cultural geology of the world.

INTERVIEWER

What were the literary influences on you?

NERUDA

Writers are always interchanging in some way: just as the air we breathe doesn't belong to one place. The writer is always moving from house to house: he ought to change his furniture. Some writers feel uncomfortable at this. I remember that Federico García Lorca was always asking me to read my lines, my poetry, and yet in the middle of my reading, he would say "Stop, stop! Don't go on, lest you influence me!"

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INTERVIEWER

About Norman Mailer. You were one of the first writers to speak of him.

NERUDA

Shortly after Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* came out, I found it in a bookstore in Mexico. No one knew anything about it: the bookseller didn't even know what it was about. I bought it because I had to take a trip and I wanted a new American novel. I thought that the American novel had died after the giants who began with Dreiser and finished with Hemingway, Steinbeck and Faulkner—but I discovered a writer with extraordinary verbal violence, matched with great subtlety and a marvelous power of description. I greatly admire the poetry of Pasternak, but *Dr. Zhivago* alongside *The Naked and the Dead* seems a boring novel, saved only in part by its description of nature, that is to say, by its poetry. I remember about that time I wrote the poem "Let the Rail Splitter Awake." This poem, invoking the figure of Lincoln, was dedicated to world peace. I spoke of Okinawa and of the war in Japan, and I mentioned Norman Mailer. My poem reached Europe and was translated. I remember that Aragon said to me: "It was a great deal of trouble to find out who Norman Mailer is." In reality, nobody knew him, and I had a certain feeling of pride in having been one of the first writers to allude to him.

INTERVIEWER

Could you comment on your intense affection for nature.

NERUDA

Ever since my childhood, I've maintained an affection for birds, shells, forests and plants. I've gone many places in search of ocean shells, and I've come to have a great collection. I wrote a book called *Art of Birds*. I wrote *Bestiary*, *Seaquake*, and *The Rose of Herbolario*, devoted to flowers, branches and

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vegetal growth. I could not live separated from nature. I like hotels for a couple of days; I like planes for an hour; but I'm happy in the woods, on the sand, or sailing, in direct contact with fire, earth, water, air.

INTERVIEWER

There are symbols in your poetry which recur and they always take the form of the sea, of fish, of birds...

NERUDA

I don't believe in symbols. They are simply material things. The sea, fish, birds exist for me in a material way. I take them into account as I have to take daylight into account. The fact that some themes stand out in my poetry—are always appearing—is a matter of material presence.

INTERVIEWER

What do the dove and guitar signify?

NERUDA

The dove signifies the dove and the guitar signifies a musical instrument called the guitar.

INTERVIEWER

You mean that those who have tried to analyze these things—

NERUDA

When I see a dove, I call it a dove. The dove, whether it is present or not, has a form for me, either subjectively or objectively—but it doesn't go beyond being a dove.

INTERVIEWER

You have said about the poems in *Residence on Earth* that

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"they don't help one to live. They help one to die."

NERUDA

My book *Residence on Earth* represents a dark and dangerous moment in my life. It is poetry without an exit. I almost had to be reborn in order to get out of it. I was saved from that desperation of which I still can't know the depths by the Spanish War, and by events serious enough to make me meditate. At one time I said that if I ever had the necessary power, I would forbid the reading of that book and I would arrange never to have it printed again. It exaggerates the feeling of life as a painful burden, as a mortal oppression. But I also know that it is one of my best books, in the sense that it reflects my state of mind. Still when one writes—and I don't know if this is true for other writers—one ought to think of where one's verses are going to land. Robert Frost says in one of his essays that poetry ought to have sorrow as its only orientation: "Leave sorrow alone with poetry." But I don't know what Robert Frost would have thought if a young man had committed suicide and left one of *his* books stained with blood. That happened to me—here, in this country. A boy, full of life, killed himself next to my book. I don't feel truly responsible for his death. But that page of poetry stained with blood is enough to make not only one poet think, but all poets... Of course, my opponents took advantage—as they do of almost everything I say—political advantage of the censure I gave my own book. They attributed to me the desire to write exclusively happy and optimistic poetry. They didn't know about that episode. I have never renounced the expression of loneliness, of anguish, or of melancholia. But I like to change tones, to find all the sounds, to pursue all the colors, to look for the forces of life wherever they may be—in creation or destruction.

My poetry has passed through the same stages as my life; from a solitary childhood and an adolescence cornered in distant, isolated countries, I set out to make myself a part of the great human multitude. My life matured, and that is all. It was in the style of the last century for poets to be tormented

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melancholiacs. But there can be poets who know life, who know its problems, and who survive by crossing through the currents. And who pass through sadness to plenitude.

—RITA GUIBERT
Translated by Ronald Christ

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Glimpses

Jane DeLynn

Marie stands by the elevator door, waiting for me. She takes my hat and coat, my handbag, and lays them by the table. She hangs my coat up. She turns to me and says "I have not seen you in a long time." She emphasizes "a long time." I move my head, staring after her dumbly. My handbag is on the table, with my hat and gloves. She is hanging up my coat.

Marie is framed by the doorway so that part of her hair is cut off by the two-inch border of the doorway. It swings out of the frame and towards the bathroom. I see my hand reach out to touch her hair, which is of medium length, brown, and soft as Ivory Flakes. She makes no motion of recognition, still less of response. My hand is by my side, holding my coffee cup.

Holding my arm parallel to the floor the sun is one and a half hands above the horizon. The sun is a pale yellow ball that forces my eyes to turn away. Its pale rays lighten the blue of the afternoon sky. It is four-thirty. When I move my eyelids together there is still the impression of light, of heat, of chaos in the darkness behind them. If I had to give these bursts of energy a name, I would call them reverse sunspots. Sunspots I say out loud. Marie looks at me and says nothing. I withdraw my hand from the horizon. The corners of her lips turn upwards in a smile.

Now she is sitting in the big chair with the footrest. Her feet sit on it as they do when she is marking papers. Often I have watched her red pencil scribble on the edge of margins,

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erasing words, erasing students' hopes. Her hands are empty now. I am on the sofa next to the chair, I hold my coffee cup on my lap and talk unceasingly. The subjects: art exhibits, modern drama, are unimportant. The point is elsewhere, in my mouth: it is very important to keep talking. She answers with new educational methods, how my high school has changed since I have graduated. Her language is direct and unallusive. It has a hard edge. It contains no reference to the past. I put my coffee cup on the table. I am waiting.

The newspaper says "Teenagers Terrorize IRT." I read the headline on the 135 degree angle the corner of the newspaper makes with the table. I find it difficult to read on the angle and I miss what Marie is saying. She looks up and stops talking. I squint my eyes but the leader is too small for me to decipher. A hand breaks the stillness of the moment: I reading, she sitting with the imaginary pencil: it is mine. I move the paper closer and read: "Old man beaten by female thugs." Her hand reaches to the coffee cup on the table. Ritual motions for the sugar. Unconscious hands. High school, students in the paper. The sharp point of the compass.

You should write a story about this she says. As always I pay close attention to her words. I do not know the this to which she refers. I am writing a story in my head as I look at her. I make mental notes of the veins in her hands, the fatness of her legs. She has brown hair and brown eyes. Her hair is long and is framed by the doorway so that the ends are cut off by the two-inch frame. Am I seeing this or thinking this. I do not know what I am doing there. Drink your coffee she says. I raise my fingers to my lips. They hold a cup. I drink. Nothing comes easily, neither the thoughts in my head nor my hands as I write. Do you like writing she says? That is a question. I am not an intelligent person. I only write what I see. Right now I see myself sitting on the sofa, looking at her. Language is too allusive to describe the situation accurately. I am doing more than sitting on the sofa. My hands are waiting. They are empty. There are memories. Writing is no more than this. Describing the situation accurately. Saying only what is there. I like to write because writings brings me money and because

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it is not a nine-to-five job. It allows me to do things like calling up Marie and walking over to her house while the sun is still shining. Writing does not interfere with my life; it is my life.

We discuss violence in the school system. It is a problem in which I am uninterested. Buffy talks about it animatedly. Her long black hair spills out of the picture frame in back of her onto the back of the sofa. I turn my head from Marie to her, from her to Marie. I listen to what they are saying. The whole past of this recent troubled year is upon them. "High school students suspended." I have been out of the city. They are a part of the New York intellectual scene as they discuss the problem of decentralization. They refer animatedly to Jason Epstein, *The New York Review of Books*. Buffy has interviewed Rhody McCoy for the school paper. She admires him though she disagrees with much of what he does. She is very vocal. She has refused coffee and her fingers have nothing to play with but each other. The fingers of her left hand curl into a fist. The fingers of her right hand overlap them to the knuckles. She caresses the left hand with the right hand. This process is repeated many times, then the hands are switched and it is the left hand that caresses the right hand. At the same time she does this she talks about the school situation. I turn my head to the left. Marie is looking at her. The look is familiar. I think of myself five years ago. Buffy does not have the sullen eyes I used to have, her hair is long and black. I am unable to tell how well she knows Marie.

On the telephone Marie recognizes my voice before I am able to say my name. I am in a telephone booth in the Fifty-ninth Street subway that is below Lexington Avenue. There are advertisements for "Hello Dolly" and "Promises, Promises." While we are talking a train pulls into the station. It hazes her words. It was Louis Armstrong singing "Hello Dolly" in 1964 when I was applying to college and Marie was my English teacher. There was no decentralization. It was before students were allowed to wear velvet bellbottoms to high school classes. I had never heard of acid. The train pulls

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out of the station. I can hear Marie clearly. I put the phone back on the cradle. I reach for the dime that is no longer there. I buy a candy bar. Marie has invited me to her home. I buy a paper. I watch for the lights of the IRT local to shine on the tracks. I buy gum.

Now the sun is lower in the sky. It has become shafts and splinters of red oxide reduplicated in the windows of the apartment house across the street. The top floors reflect a lighter, more yellow tint than the lower windows. I wonder how this is possible, seeing the sun that strikes them is solid fire. The red-orange color of the lower windows is the color of lust. I say this aloud. Buffy moves her eyes in my direction. They are a muted blue, cold, inexpressive. They reveal nothing other than the presence of the sun, for her eyelids appear slightly closer together than they would be at night. But then perhaps she is not squinting, perhaps this is the normal position of her sloe eyes.

Marie says it is strange that you should call today. I do not know what she means by strange. You call me between love affairs she says. What is significant is not the truth of this statement, but the fact that she says it. I recognize this, and am not surprised there is a sinking sensation in my left ovary. Now the sinking sensation reaches my muscles, and my heart pauses before continuing with its work. My hand rises to my brow and moves across my head in a horizontal motion. I place my fingers under my nose. I smell nothing. I move my eyes to the right and it is Buffy who is staring at me intently. I ask for another cup of coffee.

Now it is Buffy who sits by my side, swaying to some secret rhythm of her own. The conversation has reverted to the educational disorders of New York City. I consider this discussion an insult to my rank in the world. I am a writer. I live in the real world. I earn my living. I move my head to the right and to the left and to the right again. My schooldays are over I say. Education is unimportant. It is what one learns outside of school that counts. Marie and Buffy disagree with me. They say education is intimately concerned with econo-

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mic advancement. Afro-Asian studies can teach the blacks to respect themselves. Integration will reduce prejudice. It is difficult to decide whether they are right, difficult also to decide whether Buffy is right in advocating revolution, whether Marie is right in contradicting her. I write my story as they talk: I note the delicate veins on the outside of Buffy's hand as she reaches down to smooth her stockings, the smallness of her bone structure and the fineness of her nose. She has a set of perfect teeth. Her black hair shines. She is as thin and as lithe as the Modigliani portrait on the wall that frames her hair.

Buffy's eyes are half-shut as she sits on the couch. The coffee cups are empty. Marie's hand fills my cup with coffee. Buffy has no cup. Marie asks Buffy if Buffy is sure she doesn't want any coffee. As hostess Marie finds it necessary to smother her guests with food. I recognize this need. I accept her coffee, her rolls. Buffy is young and violent. "Teenage Thugs Overrun IRT." It is a symptom of the times. I am more different from Buffy than I am from Marie. I say this aloud. As I stare at Buffy she turns to the wall. When I turn my head away she looks at me. My eyes are empty; they reveal nothing of what happened five years ago or why I am there today. What do you mean she says. The linearity of my mind I say. Buffy does not know about what I am talking. McLuhan, he is not with it, says Marie. I do not like him either I want to say, but I say nothing. I lift my hand from my lap; my fingers move towards the coffee. I understand Marie better than you will ever be able to. Now it is Buffy who stares at my eyes. I make sure my face reveals neither my feelings nor the fact that I am aware of her eyes. You are of a different generation I say. Your thought is non-sequential. You are taught Afro-Asian history every afternoon. You sleep with Negroes. Blacks says Buffy. That's what I mean I say. She nods her head. She is seventeen, and she sees everything. The coffee cup is halfway to my lips. It is the silence that is overwhelming.

Year by year it is harder to write. Every sentence is a fresh observation, and differs sharply from what has preceded it. There are no words to describe the flux: only an infinite

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sentence, without beginning, without end. Buffy is staring at me. The brain sends an impulse to the upper left corner of my lip to curl. It curls. I can see only what I write. Buffy is looking into my eyes. There is no end to writing. A story is forever.

We are sitting at the coffee table. Buffy rises to say she must go to dancing class. I say I, too, must leave, but make no motion to leave my chair. We form a tableau, Marie rising and walking over to Buffy, Buffy staring at an anonymous spot on the wall, and I pushing back my chair so that the two front legs are off the floor. We stay this way for awhile, as if life were nothing more than the eternal process of saying goodbye, staring, and avoiding each other's eyes. Marie gets Buffy's coat from the closet. She makes jokes about Buffy not having got anything for her visit. Buffy says she never drinks coffee. There is a teasing quality to Marie's digs at Buffy that signify they know each other well. When Buffy walks to the door Marie holds the arms of the coat high enough for Buffy to slip into them. My stomach lurches when Marie puts her hand on Buffy's lapel. She smoothes it. Buffy looks up at her and says nothing. She tells me it was nice to have met me. I say I hope I see her again. I am uncertain as to who gives who a meaningful look, or if a meaningful look has been given. Marie comes back to the table. Buffy is a nice girl she says. I say yes. We drink coffee.

The elevators stand in a row, to the left of Marie's apartment as you stand in front of the door. Marie's hair is framed by the doorway so that part of it is within the frame of the door and part of it is outside the frame, nearer me. She watches me while I wait for the elevators. The hall contains a large amount of silence. I can feel the silence press against the sheath of skin that is my eardrum. The drum hears nothing, reports nothing. It does not move. The elevator does not come. I look up and Marie is still there, standing in the doorway. Her hair is framed. Waves of sound press against my ear. The skin responds. You should write a story she says. I nod my head. There is the elevator, waiting for me. My feet

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move towards it, carrying with them my mind. My hand rests on the rubber that is the forward part of the elevator. The door bucks occasionally and tries to shut itself but my hand is stronger than the door. It is a paradigm of human will against the world of material objects. Human will triumphs. My hand relates to the door as surely as I talk to Marie. The rubber pushes my hand. I get in. Marie still stands in the doorway, her hair partway within the frame the door makes on the wall. Part of her hair is dark against the wall. I raise my hand. I will I say. My fingers float through the air in her direction. They wave as my mouth moves. It says goodbye.

Downstairs there is the doorman, waiting for me to move forward so he can open the door. He turns a face stiff with patience towards me, his hand commences a motion that he has made thousands of times before. The years of his life are punctuated by this movement of hands: the cold against his face in winter and the sun against his face in summer. He knows the house across the street almost as well as he knows the seasons. He nods to the people of the brownstone when they walk their morning dog, in the rain he whistles for them a cab. He is part human, part brick. He is a proletarian who disapproves of revolution; he tells the tenants he does not know who Stokely Carmichael is. He is a disgrace to Marx. He watches me as I button my overcoat. He stares at my left hand that has no ring. I stop a minute to adjust my collar. It is dusk.

The sky is blue now, there is a full moon over my left shoulder. The star that is a foot from the moon promises night. Leaves are against the sky, black silhouettes that knock my heart. I remember the doorman. Five years ago. I have grown up since then. I am a writer. I write novels. The sky is the same color it always was. It is as fixed as the immutable sentences. I stand and put my gloves on, looking for Buffy.

Buffy is silhouetted on the white stone of the housefront. She waits out of sight of the doorman; her coat is buttoned and her hands are in her pockets. She holds her books in the space between her arm and the side of her body, in the crook

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her elbow makes against her pocket. Occasionally she lifts her right hand out of her pocket and flicks the ash from her cigarette. It lands on the sidewalk, several inches from her foot. I am a realist. I understand why Buffy is smoking. I do not smoke, but I, too, need something to put between my lips.

I wait outside the door. I count the stars visible in the narrow space between the buildings on this side of the street and the buildings on the other side of the street four car lanes away. There are twenty-four, up and down the evening sky. The moon is over my left shoulder. It is new. I wait a moment longer, watching Buffy look at me out of the corner of her eye. She looks to see in what direction I turn. It is towards her. Her form detaches itself from the wall. Feet move. I turn and the moon is behind my back. A taxi is by the curb, waiting for me. I hold the pregnant moment a second longer. I wave the cab away. I walk over to Buffy. I had a feeling you were there I say. She smiles.

It is later in my life that I wake up next to Buffy. Her long black hair spills out of the frame the bed makes on her body and stretches to the floor. The wind comes in and lifts a strand of hair in the caressing oxygen of spring. Buffy moves slightly, reaches out a hand which touches my breast. My body contracts. Her hand drops to the sheet and curls halfway to a fist. She is still and soft. She sleeps.

I am a writer. Most days I get up and write three pages before I make Buffy breakfast. Often we get into bed after breakfast, and by the time we get out of it the day is killed for writing. Some mornings I do not write but turn on the music and wait for Buffy to wake up. Sometimes I am impatient and wake her without waiting. I try not to do it when her eyes are moving and she is dreaming. Buffy does not like to remember her dreams.

This morning the sun is up, the sky is a bright clear blue that seems very far away and the air is fresh from last night's rain. I go over to the window and breathe deeply. I open the shades. The sun streams onto the bed, but Buffy does not

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move. It is a day for flowers, sunlight, and watching Buffy wake up. She breathes her young breaths. I turn on the radio. On comes a song I like. I sing along with it. The winter and the rain remind me that it's over, remind me once again that I was wrong. I think of Marie. She sleeps alone. The sun is shining. It could be raining. Buffy is sleeping on the bed. The song is wrong. It is never over.

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The Twenty-sixth Second

George Fox

Occasionally, if there was nothing of interest on television, Harry and Louise Overton played "featured actor." They would call back and forth the names of supporting players from films of the thirties and early forties. The object was to slip in a fictitious name without being caught. Three unchallenged false names won the game.

As usual, Louise began, looking up from her copy of *McCall's* and smiling. She was a thin, pretty woman with slightly bucked teeth. Years earlier, someone—it might have been Harry himself—had remarked that the mild deformity added a charming, gamine touch to her features. The compliment had banished the stiffness that had long haunted her upper lip. "Douglas Fowley," she said without warning.

It was nearly eleven o'clock and the Overtons' fourteen-year-old son Charles had gone to bed an hour before. Charles suffered from asthma but, on this Sunday evening late in the fall, his breathing had carried no hint of post-midnight crises.

Harry Overton, sitting on the couch, pulled in smoke from his cigarette and, though he didn't really care for the game, said: "Regis Toomey."

"Kane Richmond."

"Eugene Pallette."

"Sig Rumann."

"Catherine McLeod."

"Frank Corey."

Harry Overton hesitated. A lanky, small-nosed man with legs too long for his torso, he was an architect employed by a

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Manhattan firm that, in its brochures, boasted of having designed more drive-in banks than any other company in the Northeast.

"I never heard of Frank Corey," he said.

"You're right," his wife replied with a chuckle. "Philip Dorn."

"Minerva Urecal."

"Henry Armetta."

"Bobs Watson."

Louise's pale-knuckled left hand, formed into a loose fist, rested in her lap. Suddenly she thrust it forward and opened the fingers, revealing a small white tablet encased in cellophane. The ribbed edges of the tiny packet were yellow with age. "Harry," she said, "I found this in the inside pocket of your sports jacket this afternoon. What is it?"

Harry Overton, fighting a wave of illness that rose to batter the underside of his tongue, focused his pale blue eyes on the goldfish tank across the living room, just to the right of the flagstone fireplace. The tank light was off, so all he could distinguish were dark, cloudy shapes flickering though greenish fluid. He would have to change the water soon.

"Is it a tranquilizer?" Louise asked. "Are you nervous over something and the doctor gave you tranquilizers?"

"I'm not nervous," he said. "Forget about it, honey."

"I don't like you carrying strange pills. I have a right to know. It's nothing serious? You don't have anything serious?"

"No."

"What then? Nobody keeps secret pills unless it's something serious."

Harry Overton arose and walked to the window. It was a moonlit night and he could see the wind worrying fallen leaves in the side yard. He knew there was no use lying. She would keep on until she got the truth. She might even take the tablet out of the cellophane and taste it with the tip of her tongue. He couldn't have that.

"It's my suicide pill," he said in a low voice. "They used to issue it to us fellows in the OSS before we parachuted into occupied territory. If you were in danger of being captured

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by the Gestapo, you swallowed it and in twenty-five seconds, bam, you were done."

"Why?" Louise asked in astonishment.

"To avoid torture, of course."

"That isn't what I meant. The war's been over for twenty-five years. Why have you kept it all this time? Suppose Charles had found it when he was little? Children will swallow anything."

"I've been careful. I always carry it in my pocket. At night I lock it in my cuff link box. Never forgot before."

Louise lifted her glasses from an end table, slipped them on. He wished she hadn't. Her eyes were usually a bland brown but the lenses hardened and enlarged them. "The Gestapo isn't likely to turn up in Short Hills, New Jersey. Or in New York either. Not now. Besides, you never parachuted into occupied territory. You said so yourself lots of times. They told you your legs were too long."

Harry Overton had been an OSS supply officer during the war, keeping track of the nylon strangling cords and matchbook-sized pistols and thermite bombs disguised as automatic pencils that were part of the agents' standard kits. And, naturally, the suicide tablets. He never quite knew himself why he stole the one Louise was holding but the physical details of the event would remain with him forever. It had happened on the night of January 3, 1944, at a small airfield north of Plymouth. The heater in the Quonset hut was defective and, sitting in the well-lit supply room, he could see his own breath as he checked out three kits. The trio of saboteurs due to be dropped near Cherbourg in a few hours were barely visible beyond the chicken-wire screen partitioning the hut. They wore black sweaters and black wool caps, the kind that covered the ears. They spoke only French, like conscientious language students cramming in the last possible bit of practice before a final exam. Later, when they had vanished in the darkness outside the hut, he dipped his hand into the box of cyanide tablets, palmed one and hid it in a field jacket pocket. Possessing it had calmed the pity and unreasonable fear that had flooded through him at the agents'

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silent departure...

"I kept it," Harry Overton said wearily. "What's the difference why? As a souvenir. Now give it back."

But her hand, the veins on the back standing out, tightened around the tablet. "It's too dangerous. I want to know the real reason. It was to kill yourself, wasn't it?"

"Not the way you mean."

"How many ways are there?"

He sat down again, pressed the balls of his thumbs together and revolved them counterclockwise. "Suppose there was an accident," he said, knowing she wouldn't understand. "Suppose on the way to work one morning the train plunged down an embankment and caught fire and I was pinned helpless by a piece of wreckage. Which would be worse, slowly burning to death or taking the pill?"

"On the Lackawanna?"

"An auto wreck then. What if a trailer truck overturned on my car, squashing me, still conscious but in terrible agony?"

"That's suicide."

He gave way at last to his irritation. "We aren't Catholics or anything."

"I *am* your wife. There's more to think about too. Suppose you *were* caught in a burning train and you took that awful pill. They wouldn't pay the insurance. Think about that."

"You put insurance above my pain?"

She swiftly removed her glasses, a trace of tears in her eyes. "Of course not. I don't understand any of this, that's all. Name one other man we know who carries on OSS suicide pill to the office."

"I was just lucky enough to have one."

She began to cry openly. "You're lying about the train. It's not that. You're unhappy with Charles and me. You think that if things get too bad you can always take the pill."

"I'm not unhappy." He wanted to tell her that the tablet actually made his life better. Each day, on the ride into the city, the tiny transparent packet in his coat was a talisman against the unexpected, available to no one else aboard the

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train. He, Harry Overton, was ready for the worst, so ready that for more than twenty years he had ceased to fear it at all. However, he kept silent, realizing she would never understand the consolation a few grams of cyanide could give a man.

He again asked her to return the tablet and again she refused. After long, mute minutes, they went upstairs, pausing before Charles' door as they always did, listening for wheezes. There were none. "Perhaps I should put the humidifier in anyway," Louise whispered.

"Let him alone," Harry said, going into the bathroom. "He's all right."

When he emerged, she was in bed, both of her thin arms lying outside the blankets, hands unclasped. She had hidden the tablet, he knew, desperation forming like a knotted muscle in his diaphragm. Later, when she was asleep, he would get up and search for it. He switched off the light and slid into bed, shivering on contact with the cool sheets, then lay rigid.

"Harry," Louise whispered in the darkness, "I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"That pill. What you said about using it if you were trapped in a burning train or a squashed car. Suppose I got an incurable disease that really hurt? Would you give it to me?"

Harry wasn't sure how to answer. His first impulse was to growl, "Of course not. It's my pill, not yours." Thinking better of it, he said nothing at all.

"Or if Charles' asthma got worse..."

"I wouldn't give it to him," Harry said. "Or you either. Never even occurred to me. By the way, where did you hide it?"

"As long as you have it, could I ever be sure? I might spend the rest of my life wondering whether, if I got sick, you wouldn't do me in out of pity."

"I could do that without the pill. I could smother you with a pillow. Besides, I got it in 1944 and we didn't even meet until '52. Wasn't thinking of you at all."

"Harry, stop joking," she said, giggling. "What's the pill for really? It's for your sinusitis, isn't it?"

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Angry at last, Harry Overton kicked off the bedclothes and, with a shaking hand, turned on the night table lamp. His long face white, he cried: "Give it to me, damn it! It's mine and I want it!"

She sat up and shook her head, lips pressed together. "Not until you admit you made up everything you told me downstairs. You've no right to frighten me like this."

He realized that he might hate her. It was strange that the possibility had never occurred to him before. He thought back over the fifteen years of their marriage, of the games that had preceded "featured actor." For a while, in the beginning, they had even played charades, just the two of them. But at least he had had the tablet.

"If you believe I was lying," he said in an even tone, "take the pill. That'll prove it one way or the other. Go on, take it... No, wait a minute." He stepped over to the small antique writing desk in the corner, brought back a pad of letter paper and a pen, threw them in her lap. "Write a suicide note first. No reason why I should get in trouble with the police just because you think I'm a liar."

His blue eyes narrowed as Louise defiantly yanked the cellophane packet from the brassiere she always wore beneath her nightgown. She tore away the sheath, dropped the white disc into her left palm, gazed down at it.

"Write the note first," he yelled in alarm. "Don't do it without writing the note!"

She was out of the room before he completed the warning, leaping from their bed and rushing through the door, her nightgown billowing. He heard stumbling footsteps on the stairs. Afraid of what she might do, he pounded after her.

He was too late. When he reached the living room, Louise already crouched in front of the goldfish tank. The tablet had been manufactured to dissolve instantly. The only trace of it left in the green water was a smear of foam on the tank floor, right between the miniature deep-sea diver and a two-turreted castle where the angelfish liked to hide. Harry eased himself into a chair and stared at the tank over Louise's shoulder.

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In unison, like balloons escaping from a carnival vendor's hand, the fish bobbed to the surface and floated lifelessly on their sides.

"You weren't lying," Louise said, wrenching her gaze away from the bodies. "Upstairs, when you dared me to take the pill, you'd have stopped me before I did it, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then there's no harm done, is there? Except for the fish. We'd better go back to bed now."

For a single, wild moment he considered plunging his face into the tank, swallowing as much of the poisoned water as he could. Then it occurred to him that the cyanide might be too diluted to kill a man and he would end up with horrible but temporary stomach cramps. Besides, the idea of gulping down all that green algae repelled him.

"I'll get up early and empty the tank," Louise said from the stairs. "I wouldn't want Charles to see the fish that way. He loved them."

Harry shook his head, his broad hands opening and closing on the knees of his too-long legs. "I'll never be able to get another one," he said. "I'm not even sure they make them anymore."

"It's late, Harry."

"I'm not going to work tomorrow."

She stopped halfway up the stairs and said: "What?"

"I'm not going to work tomorrow, Louise. I couldn't possibly get on the Lackawanna without my pill." He tried to reinforce his threat with what he hoped was a frighteningly half-sane laugh but it came out a stuttering, apologetic titter. When that failed, he shouted as loud as he could: "Douglas Dumbrille!"

"I don't feel like playing the game," Louise said as she continued up the stairs.

"Veda Ann Borg," he cried after her, knowing it wouldn't do any good. In the morning he would be aboard the train, sitting on the stiff, yellow reed seats, and death in twenty-five seconds would just be a memory.

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Notes on Contributors

Muin Beseisu was born in Gaza, and attended the American University in Cairo.

Julien Blaine has published *Cette Carte et Autres Faits* (Approches) and *Essai sur la sculpturale* (Editions Galerie Denise Davy).

Steve Brooks lives in San Francisco.

Stephen A. Canada's paintings have been shown in California. His poetry has appeared in *Evergreen Review*, *Breakthru*, *Statement*, and *beyond baroque*.

Ronald Christ is the author of *Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Illusion*.

Tom Clark's most recent books are *Smack*, *Neil Young*, and *Rock Notes* (with Clark Coolidge).

Robert Creeley has recently published a collection of essays, *A Quick Graph* (Four Seasons Foundation), and a collection of poems, *Finger* (Calder and Boyars).

Mahmoud Darwish, born in Galilee, now lives in Haifa. His books of poems include *The Lover of Palestine* and *My Beloved Rises from her Sleep*. He was recently awarded the Lotus Prize by the Soviet Writers' Union.

Jane DeLynn has published poetry and fiction in *Suction*, *Gum*, and *The Iowa State Liquor Store*. A first novel, *Killing Time*, will be published by Random House.

George Fox's stories and articles have appeared in *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. A novel, *Without Music*, will be published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rita Guibert's collection of interviews with Latin American writers will be published by Knopf.

Robert Harris attended the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Harry Mathews has published two novels, *The Conversions* and *Tlooth*. Juillard Press brought out *The Ring*, a collection of poems, in 1970.

Michael McClure's most recent book of poems is *Star* (Grove Press).

Jackie Monnier lives in Paris.

Patrick Nolan's collection of poems is entitled *Rock Me/Roll Me/Vast Fatality*.

James Salter's most recent book is *A Sport and a Pastime* (Doubleday-Paris Review Editions).

Jonathan Schwartz's collection of stories, *Almost Home*, was published recently by Doubleday.

Rose Styron's poems and articles have appeared in *Harper's*, *The Red Clay Reader*, *The Yale Review*, and *Vogue*.

Kathrine Talbot has written three novels: *Fire in the Sun* (Putnam), *The Innermost Cage* (Putnam, Faber & Faber) and *Return* (Faber & Faber).

Charlie Vermont lives in the western United States.

Dallas E. Wiebe is the author of the novel, *Skyblue the Badass* (Doubleday-Paris Review Editions).

John Wieners' two recent books, *Selected Poems* and *Nerves*, have been published by Jonathan Cape.

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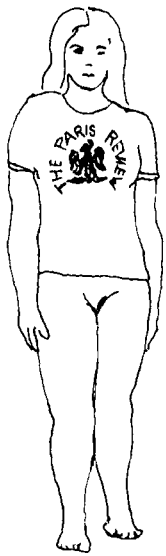

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